TALES

OF

MY TIME.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF BLUE-STOCKING HALL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

WHO IS SHE?

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,

NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1829.

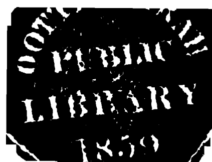
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WHO IS SHE?

"As a stranger give it welcome." HAMLET.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following story is founded on facts which came within the knowledge of the writer. The precise point at which truth ends, and fiction begins, it is not necessary to divulge; but in an age when an avidity for the stimulus of real adventure seems in a great degree to have superseded the love of mere romance, it may not be uninteresting to state that the heroine of the following pages is not altogether a creature of imagination.



CHAPTER I.

"Oh! this is trim!"—Troilus and Cressida.

At not more than a stone's throw from a neat market town, in a certain shire of England, lived Francis Hartland, Esq. in a well-built square house, which was separated from the King's high road, by a lawn of twenty acres. Round this lawn a double row of handsome elms lined a ring fence, and formed the outer boundary, in that part next the house, of a bank covered with all sorts of shrubs, which sloped in a gradually inclined plane, from the shining laurel to the dwarf cistus, and met a broad belt of gravel, hard and smooth as marble, through which no upstart weed ever dared to force its way. This walk was fringed by a border of flowers, in such variety of glowing tints, that

lawn and all might be aptly compared to a robe of green velvet, trimmed with a phylactery of broidered work, worthy of Sheba's Queen in all her glory, while the whole exhibited such precision and nicety in the keeping, as to suggest the idea that its owner, in league with the fairies, possessed some secret charm against every noxious reptile and devouring fly.

This *Snuggery* was not the hereditary right of Mr. Hartland, but was purchased for valuable consideration, and he came to live in it, nobody knew from whence, or how incited.

His appearance did not afford rich material for romance; for he was a sleek, mild, contented looking man of forty odd, with an open countenance. A spacious forehead of pipe-clay whiteness, from which his hair was making annual recession, surmounted a nose of latinostrous projection, eyes of rather the "lack lustre" character, and cheeks of roseate hue, or perhaps more truly, though less poetically, of brick-dust dye; while the *toute ensemble* received decoration from a set of teeth which seemed as if they had been newly chiselled from

the finest block of ivory ever imported from the land of Ophir. But curiosity can find browsing even where food is most scantily provided; and accordingly nothing could surpass the sensation produced by Mr. Hartland's arrival at Henbury Lodge. The industry and zeal set in motion by this event were rewarded at length to a certain extent by information that the new comer was related to a noble house, and possessed a clear independent property of twelve hundred a year. Farther deponent sayeth not; but it usually happens that where truth ends, generous fiction takes up the tale, and a thousand stories were soon in circulation. That which excited most interest, and was therefore most frequently repeated, though entirely divested of foundation, gave to understand that a matrimonial disappointment had driven him from the scene of mortification, and induced his removal to a region in which he might hope to forget its sting.

Mr. Hartland's manner and appearances unquestionably contradicted this surmise; but no matter for that. We know that stubborn facts

are accustomed to bend to theory in cases more impracticable than this; and therefore, though we may object to the idea that features which seemed to be moulded for the seat of a perennial smile, had ever been "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," no such incongruity was perceived in the market-town of which our narrative makes mention; and not only was Mr. Hartland believed to have suffered all the pangs and penalties of slighted passion; but by degrees a certain name, locality, height, complexion, and many other particulars, came to be added respecting the cruel fair one, with such variance as suited the character of each reporter.

The honest truth of the matter was, that Mr. Hartland came to his present independence late in life, and regulated his mind till then, by the *pole-star* maxim, which he imbibed with his alphabet, that the worst of all poor things was a poor marriage. His father died before he was born; and his mother, who understood the art of making one pound perform the work of two in any other hands, had contrived to educate her darling and only child, by exercising the

closest economy; but, strange to say, instead of placing him in any profession by which he might support himself, and repay her for the sacrifices she had made, she preferred keeping him at home, and it was her pride and delight, that whatever were the privations which *she* endured, her son should know no want. Young Hartland had his horse, while his mother assured him that she *chose* to walk; his boots and shoes shone like mirrors, his hat was glossy as a raven's wing, and his whole wardrobe appointed with as much care as if he only waited for his legal majority to step into a good estate.

But one and twenty years had looked at themselves in the glass of one and twenty more, ere any change occurred; and then the heirship to a comfortable property put him in possession of easy circumstances only just three months before death deprived him of her with whom he had passed his days. This event rendered his home intolerable, and ability to quit the scene of his loss coinciding with inclination to do so, Mr. Hartland sought in all directions for an eligible residence. Being a man of orderly and

clock-work habits, who had performed a measured round of daily action from the time of his earliest childhood, he felt no desire to alter the manner of his life, but only wished to continue its wonted routine upon a different stage. It never once occurred to his imagination that foreign travel, or even the recreation of a neighbouring watering place, might afford diversion to the uneasy thoughts which possessed his mind; but lighting accidentally upon an advertisement, which set forth that Henbury, with its appurtenances, was to be sold, he immediately resolved on being the purchaser. There were just as many acres as constituted his *beau ideal* of a snug abode, and he lost no time in transplanting thither every biped and quadruped on which he was accustomed to rest his eyes, insomuch that when first he opened them after sleeping in his new *domicile*, every thing around was so tranquilly arranged that he would have been scarcely sensible of having quitted his ancient abiding place, had not the painful feeling been removed of association with the image of his poor mother, whose arm-chair and work-

basket no longer rose upon his view, empty and unoccupied in their allotted corner.

Now it may easily be conceived that Mr. Hartland, such as we have depicted him, though himself unperturbed, caused an active stir in the neighbourhood of his new habitation. The tradespeople all gave testimony to his being "a pure substantial man, who paid for every thing he had like a true gentleman." The regularity of his attendance at church gained him the rector's marked approval; while the apothecary sighed as he contemplated the damask of a check which seemed to hold out little hope of requiring aid from the leech's skill, or the rosy conserves of his shop. But the chief commotion was among the female part of the community, who, some for themselves, and others for their daughters, set a longing eye on Henbury's "crisped shades and bowers," where revelled "the spruce and jocund spring." On Sundays a general determination of gay hats and bonnets was observable towards that part of the church which was occupied by Mr. Hartland, where such a stream of floating ribbons might be re-

marked converging to his pew, as to authorise the belief that a current of the electrid fluid set in that direction, and drew the silken pennants thus to a point. The new comer was visited and invited by all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and declared to be an acquisition wherever he appeared. "Upon my word, a very sensible steady man is Mr. Hartland," was the usual panegyric pronounced by his hosts, while the old ladies protested that he played a capital game of whist, and the young confessed that though he had passed the first season of youth, he had not seen out its bloom.

Now it so happened that in the centre of the market-place, and in a house distinguished by two bay windows so prominent and closely set, that they looked like the eyes of a prawn, and served as spectacles to her who dwelt within, there lived a maiden yclept Jemima Ferret, whose name remarkably coincided with her character and vocation. Nature had originally bestowed upon her features divested of all attraction, and the small-pox had fatally confirmed the decree which had been issued in her

cradle against the chances of a husband. Jemima had attained the age of fifty without a single proposal, though her favourite adage, and one which she repeated with such emphasis as to prove that she believed it in her heart, was, that "every Jack has his Jill."

When, however, half a century had fairly glided down the stream of time, Miss Ferret transferred with honest zeal all those exertions to the circle which surrounded her, which had hitherto proved inefficacious while applied to her own use; and as the materials upon which she worked were often widely different from those on which her skill had been originally employed, the success was proportionate; and Jemima Ferret rose to the highest pinnacle of consideration, as the most adroit and judicious negociator who ever made a match, and brought together two individuals in the holy bands of wedlock. Such was the profound sagacity, such the acknowledged ability and discretion of this hymeneal plenipotentiary, that she was always given *carte blanche* to proceed according to her own views, and there was a general understand-

ing that whatever she "*brought about*," was effected in the very best manner.

In fact, such was the confidence which she inspired, that her neighbours frequently avoided betraying their wishes in any direct *commission*, relying upon her tact and penetration for discovering the secret purpose of their hearts, and forwarding their wishes if no pre-arrangement of her own militated against them; in which case it was well known that her manœuvring so far surpassed any tactics which could be brought in opposition, as to secure the crown of victory, and render vain every effort at competition.

Not to lead our readers into any false conclusions, which a little trouble in the way of explanation might prevent, it may be well to state the motives which induced an activity of zeal so very striking and conspicuous. Be it known, then, that Miss Ferret's income was a very small one, and though since she had given up all hope of bettering her fortune by a lucrative barter of such qualifications as she had to exchange for their money price, she had improved her

means, by sinking her little capital for an annuity, it was not so liberal a stipend as to render her by any means indifferent to increase of comfort; and she prudently considered that the next best thing to forming a good establishment for herself, which we have hinted had hitherto proved impracticable, would be to secure as many settlements as she could for her friends, amongst whom she might pass from house to house much to the solace of her spirits and the relief of her purse.

In this office of match-making, then, which she raised to the dignity of a regular trade, or profession, she put forth all the strength of her talents, and prospered exceedingly. She had all sorts, sizes, and descriptions under her patronage; and her powers were so generally known, that though people did not like to own their obligation to a third person in matters of so delicate a nature, they were nevertheless secretly felt to be of such importance, that to conciliate Miss Ferret's regards became a point of rivalry in and about the town in which she resided.

Mr. Hartland, without being aware of the honour, was placed at the head of her list for matrimonial preferment as soon as he had come into possession of Henbury; but for *once*, Jemima was puzzled about a help-mate for him, some objection having occurred to three several young ladies, whom she kept constantly in mind, and who were still on the unattached service. When things are least expected, however, they often come to pass, and it so chanced, that while Hymen's *chargé d'affaires* was at fault for her game, Miss Robinson came to pay a visit at Colbrook, the seat of Sir Roger Goodman, an opulent and corpulent Baronet, who lived within the district which Miss Ferret resolved should limit the circuit of her exertions; because to have engaged in distant experiment would have increased difficulties, and diminished the probability of successful result.

The arrival of this lady, who deserves to be the heroine of a chapter, as she was soon destined to be head of a house, at once furnished a subject to animate the genius of our fair undertaker.

CHAPTER II.

"The first springs of great events, like those of great rivers, are often mean and little."—SWIFT.

MISS Robinson, the heroine of our present chapter, was just five and thirty, tall, thin, and well dressed, with something in her manner smart, clever, cheerful, and *offhand*, but free from boldness, which rendered her particularly agreeable to *shy* men, with whom she was observed to be a wonderful favourite. *Then* Miss Robinson had a "pretty fortune" of five thousand pounds entirely at her own disposal; and the only possible manner of accounting for her protracted "single blessedness," was by the supposition that either some "disappointment" had occurred in early life, which she was too proud or too independent to turn to advantage, or that she had been "over nice" in making her election, and discovered now that people might be too fas-

tidious for the rapidity with which youth and bloom wing their cruel flight.

This at least was the way in which the point was decided by general report, and how the case really stood is not material to our present purpose to determine. The reader may perhaps imagine that Miss Ferret was not of such a grade in society, as to admit of her insinuating herself amongst the guests in a baronet's house, and that her ambition, confined to an humbler walk, would scarcely aspire so high as to rule the destinies of two such people as Miss Robinson and Mr. Hartland, but the fact was otherwise. A *downright* country neighbourhood, far removed from metropolitan fastidiousness, admits of occasional mixtures unknown to high life in town, and when we consider that the Ferret family, of which Jemima was the last remnant, had lived with credit, and voted steadily for Sir Roger during a course of years, as also that Miss Ferret's central position close to the market-place, afförded her opportunity of forestalling the scanty and uncertain supplies of fish, sweetbreads, and other delicacies which are the

pivots on which turns the fame of a dinner entertainment in a remote situation, it cannot surely surprise any reasonable person that Miss Ferret should often be invited to mount her pony, and with her dinner dress tied in a handkerchief, and suspended from the pummel, solicited to partake of the good cheer which her late and early vigilance had provided. She was, besides, a woman of address. If she passed a carriage on the road, she drew her veil over her face, and never rode up to the front door.

She had likewise a permanent deposit of flowers, feathers, and furbelows, which were left in a bandbox at Colbrook, under the guardianship of Lady Goodman's maid, with whom she was a prime favourite; as, however multifarious the concerns on her hands, she never forgot to slip a volume of the last novel into her bundle for Mrs. Hopkins. If a servant was to be hired, Miss Ferret inquired the character; if a bargain was to be had, Miss Ferret heard of, and recommended it to her friends, and when all her various *utilities* were performed, the *dulce* was not neglected. Enriched with a count-

less fund of *on dits*, and freighted with charades, epigrams, epithalamiums, and pasquinades, this active member of society defied all the powers of dulness to produce stagnation of tongues, whenever she was one of the company.

Well, in brisk spirits and iron-sided health, after executing a list of commissions, half a yard in length, for Lady Goodman, off cantered Miss Ferret, in joyous anticipation of a pleasant week at Colbrook. Her reception was gladdening. "My dear creature, welcome," said Lady Goodman, "you are actually my right hand; I do not know what in the world I should do without you. Did you remember the wax candles, and the snuff for Sir Roger, and the cards, and my watch which I sent to have a new crystal, and did you pay Farquar's bill?"

"I have done, ordered, and paid every thing."

"Welcome, my dear, a thousand times!" replied Lady Goodman; "come, and tell me all the news."

"Ah! Ferret," exclaimed Sir Roger, who entered at this moment, "I rejoice to see you. Sad weather this; I have been as dead as ditch

water, I can tell you, and am glad that you are come to keep me awake. The glass too is rising; you bring good luck with you; but here is Mr. Hartland riding up the avenue; I must go and meet him."

"Oh! I'm glad that you have asked Mr. Hartland; that's a nice man; I've seen a great deal of him lately," said Miss Ferret, as she turned to Lady Goodman; "but hav'nt you got Miss Robinson with you? I long to see her: How does she look? when did she come? does she stay long?"

"She arrived on Wednesday, stays a month, and I never saw her looking better," answered Lady Goodman.

"A nice thing," said Miss Ferret, "if we could make up a match between Mr. Hartland and Miss Robinson, would'nt it, Lady G.?"

"So it would;" replied her Ladyship; "but though your fame stands high, I think you'll hardly have ingenuity to bring *that* matter to bear. They say that he's not at all a marrying man, and if he's one of the bashful fraternity, there will not be time to get over the horrors of

presentation to a stranger, before Harriet will leave us to go to her sister in Scotland."

"We must only not lose time," said Miss Ferret, "but make hay while the sun shines."

The door opened, and Sir Roger presented Mr. Hartland to the ladies. Though not an elegant man, there was nothing either coarse or revolting in his demeanour. On the contrary, he comported himself extremely well, in a plain and equable manner, without effort or perturbation, whatever were the society into which he happened to fall. A phlegmatic temperament, combining with constitutional prudence, and his mother's counsel, had preserved Mr. Hartland in early life from those exciting circumstances which often plunge young people into love entanglements; and incredible as it may seem to those who have been differently situated, it is not the less true, that he had lived so little in mixed society, and had been so little in the way of *flirtation*, that no rumour of marriage had ever been coupled with his name; and thus at an age when others have *handed over* their sensibilities to a new generation, this se-

rene and unaffected man was only commencing his career of life, with all the simplicity of untried youth.

The company assembled; and such as have experienced the up-hill work of conversation at a country dinner, when the subjects of weather, crops, the moon, and the roads are *pumped dry*, will easily believe, that if Miss Ferret were not the most polished woman in the world, her animation rendered her, notwithstanding, the most agreeable ingredient upon many occasions, in those assemblies which her presence enlivened. She had the art to shake a drawing-room together, if we may use such a simile; and wherever she was she contrived to prevent that *stratification* of men and women which madame de Staël has so happily described, as characteristic of an English provincial half hour before dinner. Miss Ferret had seen the *last* newspaper, or talked with "an intelligent man who had stepped from the coach" in the precise moment of her setting out; or she had heard a paragraph read from a London letter; or had a conference with the post-master immediately before she

quitted home; in short she knew something either true or false, which no one else happened to know, of every thing and every body. Thin and active, she glided about the room, and brought people into actual contact who had never interchanged a look till she appeared. Like the grouting of a wall she compacted and cemented what was nothing but a heap of loose disjointed stones, till her vivacious tongue poured in its eloquence amongst them.

When the glad announcement was sounded, that dinner was served, Miss Ferret, who had laid her plan of operations, commenced them by keeping up such a cross fire of talk, while the company were in the act of descending the stairs, that by the time they reached the dining-parlour, she new marshalled the guests without being perceived by any one, and contrived to slide herself into a chair between Miss Robinson and Mr. Hartland. The more obvious arrangement which, by placing the gentleman in the centre, would have given both ladies an equal claim on his attention, might not have been so judicious; but by Miss Ferret's disposition of

affairs, she constituted herself the "soft intermediate" through whom any intercourse held by the extremes must pass; and she was thus enabled to regulate and guide it as was most conducive to her ultimate ends. Before the dessert came upon the table she had ventured to insinuate that there was a wonderful sympathy in the tastes of her *protegés*; and as she conveyed their sentiments from one to the other upon the comparative merits of roast and boiled, fricassee and fry, hot and cold, town and country, with sundry other interesting opposites which she herself suggested, there certainly did appear to be a harmony of opinion which bid fair for domestic union in that state of life which, we are taught to believe, traces much of the unhappiness by which it is, alas! so frequently embittered, to a fatal talent for disputation upon such like topics of daily recurrence.

The perpetual succession of single drops will wear out a rock, and therefore Miss Ferret seemed to be guided by sound discretion in her admiration of minor harmonies, life being, as she always observed, "made up of *little things*."

From generals it was natural to descend to particulars, and Henbury itself was on the *tapis* ere the ladies withdrew. Miss Ferret asked Miss Robinson, if she, who was *so* partial to the pursuit of rural objects, and knew "*every* thing about plants from the oak to the daisy," had ever seen a cork tree?

On being answered in the negative, Miss Ferret exclaimed, "Oh I am *so* glad that we have any thing new to shew you! By the bye, *madcap* that I am, I am reckoning without my host, and must have Mr. Hartland's leave to perform my promise, as it is at Henbury that the curiosity which I have mentioned is to be found. They say that it was brought over a sapling from Cintra, near Lisbon, fully an hundred years ago, by an officer who gave it to my poor grandfather, who then rented the lands which now belong to Mr. Hartland."

Mr. Hartland blushed, and his skin being thin and fair, the suffusion was manifest to a degree which augured well for setting fire to the train which was laid in Miss Ferret's mind, as he replied, "I have horses which cannot be

employed in a better service, and at any time I shall be happy to engage their best offices in procuring such an honour as you kindly design for their master."

"Upon my word, Mr. Hartland, you are very polite, and much more than I deserve after such a liberty as I have taken; but I mean to profit by it, I assure you. Miss Robinson ought not to suffer for my inadvertence in forgetting, that with my poor grandfather all *my* interest in Henbury passed away. We will accept your friendly invitation, though not your horses; for I am sure, that unless the rheumatism pinched severely, Sir Roger could not refuse his favourite Miss Robinson any thing. You know, my dear, that Sir Roger admires you more than any one; and I often tell Lady Goodman, that she is the best tempered, amiable creature in the world not to be jealous; but she dotes upon you quite as much. So you see that I have no chance of breaking the peace at Colbrook, which is mortifying, as it is proverbially, you know, an old maid's province and privilege to make mischief wherever she goes."

What with blushing, bantering, laughing, and complimenting, a very fair measure of execution was done before the party re-assembled above stairs, and Miss Ferret, who, like all wise people, was a keen observer of portents, remarked that Mr. Hartland was the first gentleman to leave the dining-room; upon which she gave a significant wink, accompanied by a smile, the meaning of which was only understood by Miss Robinson, to whom Miss Ferret had just whispered previously that she saw strange things in her tea-cup.

To talk of fortunes and fortune-tellers might have been too direct a mode of attack. So thought one who was never mistaken in her calculation, and turning rapidly to a little black dog which sat wagging his tail at Lady Goodman's side, Miss Ferret, with masterly presence of mind, said, as if continuing the previous conversation, "Well, it shall be submitted, as Miss Robinson *will have it so*, to Mr. Hartland. Oh! here he is! Come here, Duke—shew yourself to this gentleman. Mr. Hartland, Miss Robinson and I have had almost a duel about this little

animal, which she declares is not of the true Norfolk breed; while I maintain that it is; and moreover that the first of the kind was brought here by my poor uncle Jacob Ferret, who got him at Arundel Castle, and carried him, when a puppy, many a weary mile in his bosom. Now I think *my* information decisive; Miss Robinson however will not yield; but to settle the dispute, she says that you shall be umpire."

Mr. Hartland looked evidently highly gratified, and proceeded directly to an examination of Duke's mouth, Lady Goodman laughing *à gorge deployée* at the ready witted Ferret and the confusion of Miss Robinson, who, all astonishment at our diplomatist's facility of invention, was completely nonplused. To have contradicted Miss Ferret's statement, however, would only have made matters worse, and proved still more unequivocally to Mr. Hartland that he had been the subject of discussion; so quietly acquiescing, she waited in silence for judgment to be pronounced.

"Miss Robinson is quite right," said Mr. Hartland. "Duke is a beautiful creature, but all his ancestors are not from Arundel."

"Well, well, needs must, and I give up," answered Miss Ferret; "but it is enough to provoke a saint that Miss Robinson is always right, and I am always wrong. I firmly believe that she bribes all our judges."

Her next *coup d'essai* was at the card-table. She had accomplished the point of involving Miss Robinson and Mr. Hartland in a descant upon all manner of spaniels, pointers, pugs, and poodles, which ramified into sundry other topics, and she now thought it high time to look after Sir Roger, for whom she soon arranged a rubber of whist; and after manœuvring for some time, set down the Baronet and an excellent player who lived in his neighbourhood, against the pair whom she determined to bring together in a partnership of a more durable continuance.

"Come, my dear," said she, "Lady Goodman always makes me her *aide de camp*. I am beating up for recruits. Here are Sir Roger and Mr. Gresham ready: Mr. Hartland will play, I know; but unless *you* are kind enough to take a hand, we shall be badly off. Do you

begin, and I will cut in by and by. I know that you are not fond of cards, but you are always fond of obliging."

So saying, she bustled the people into their places, talking unceasingly—cut for partners herself, to save time she said, and had them all seated and the first deal commenced, before any one was aware how he or she came to be so disposed and employed.

When Miss Ferret had skimmed round the room, setting every body and mind in motion, she returned to a post where she was always welcome, particularly when fortune favoured, namely, at the corner of the card-table, *all but* in Sir Roger's pocket. From this vantage-ground she viewed the game; remembering every card, and gave a casting voice on sundry contested questions. From the same situation she likewise dispensed between the deals the pungent jest, the lively sally, or smart repartee: raised the sinking spirits of a vanquished foe, or curbed the too triumphant crowing of success. Here too she sat ready to ply her host with a pinch of snuff, or a judiciously tempered dose of

flattery, as the case required. No genius ever elicited in the corps diplomatique is on record for a nicer trait of generalship than was exhibited on this evening by our female politician, who had calculated to a hair, and now shewed the perfection of her practice by bringing out her scheme with flying colours. Miss Ferret knew that Miss Robinson was no whist player, and though Mr. Hartland was a remarkably good one, the inferior skill of his partner would, she equally knew, so far counteract his sagacity as to prevent any chance of victory over the well-sustained game of two such antagonists as Sir Roger Goodman and Mr. Gresham. It was Miss Ferret's design that the Baronet should win; and in order to explain the rationale of her plan, it may not be amiss to give a brief sketch in this place of this worthy's character.

Sir Roger was descended from an ancient house, and inherited a fine place, but small fortune, which occasioned a perpetual strife between family pride and poverty. He had been at school what is called a plover-pated boy, and in fact arrived at manhood's prime with as light

a burthen of learning as any dunce need ever desire to carry. The sports of the field, however, gave him ample occupation, and he married the daughter of a wealthy trader, whose well lined coffers would have supplied the deficiency of his patrimonial inheritance, if an ill timed bankruptcy had not frustrated his hopes. This was a severe stroke; it was however irremediable, and while health and strength continued, matters went on tolerably well. Sir Roger became the most skilful farmer in the whole country, and Lady Goodman, who was a virtuous and prudent woman, managed her department with cleverness and economy.

But as time revolved, reverses occurred; two or three infant children dropped off—Colbrook was left without an heir—and a chronic rheumatism succeeded, which called for more temper, resignation, and resource of mind than poor Sir Roger possessed to meet the demand. His decline of life, therefore, exhibited the sorry picture of a nervous, growling old man, who revenged every cloud in the sky which produced a sharper twinge, on every body who

came in his way. His temper was graduated like the barometer, and rose or fell with the elasticity of the atmosphere.

Amongst the most exasperating trials of his life was loss at cards; and yet to abstain from playing was a still greater cross to one so entirely dependent, as was Sir Roger, on external excitement. He delighted in the company of Miss Ferret, who acted like sal volatile on his spirits, and Lady Goodman was so glad to have her at Colbrook, that it might always have been the residence of this useful personage, if her pride had not revolted at the idea of being called "*a companion.*"

Such then was the outline of domestic affairs in the family of Goodman, and Miss Ferret knew what she was about, when she resolved that Sir Roger should find his purse much heavier at the end than beginning of the evening. But how did Mr. Hartland feel respecting these arrangements of which he appeared to be the victim? He was amply compensated by the partnership in which his losses were sustained; and which furnished occasion for several allusions, artfully

improved by Miss Ferret, to fate—fortune—identity of interests—and sympathy in adversity, which never advancing in *direct* allusion beyond the literal precincts of the game in hand, suggested, notwithstanding, pleasing thoughts of an undefined nature which were as new to Mr. Hartland as if he had just entered his seventeenth year, and experienced for the first time, the stimulus and delight which is felt by a boy when taken notice of in female society.

So happy was the progress of affairs, that when the cards were shuffled in the last deal by Miss Robinson, and she summed up in a *total* the various items of apology which had preceded, by saying, "Well, Mr. Hartland, my bad play has been visited severely on you; your temper has indeed been tried in the furnace, and you have reason to remember the evil star which condemned you to such a destiny this evening:" her partner was observed to colour, while he replied, with more animation than could have been anticipated in one who had lost every rubber, "Miss Robinson, it is more agreeable to fail in

some company than succeed elsewhere. I can remember nothing but the *pleasures* of this day."

"Why, my dear creature," said Miss Ferret, as she addressed Miss Robinson, "you have been horribly unlucky. I protest you have nothing for it left but selling out of the funds to pay off your debts, and though all *you* Change-alley people have been turned to *coiners* by the late rise of stock, it will not do to lift one's capital."

The table broke up; Mr. Gresham rubbed his hands self complacently, and moving briskly towards a window, said, "Somebody mentioned a star just now, which reminds me to look for some friendly ray to guide me home."

Mr. Hartland, who was equally interested in the light of the firmament, followed slowly, and was the first to exclaim, "How dark it is!"

"*It is indeed,*" answered Miss Ferret. "Look out, Sir Roger, it is black as soot. I think you will have to answer to Mrs. Gresham for her husband's life if you let him go home to-night."

Sir Roger was in the highest state of good humour, and seizing directly on the hospitable

hint, declared that neither of his guests should "stir a foot." Lady Goodman, ever ready to second a kind feeling, praised the merits of a well-aired bed to each of the gentlemen. Miss Ferret knew that Mr. Gresham would refuse to stay, which he did, alleging that Mrs. Gresham would be uneasy were he not to return, and she wished, as well as thought, that Mr. Hartland would remain if invited; in which speculation, accordingly, she was also right, and seeing him hesitate, she ran towards the bell, saying, "I assure you it would be folly to attempt riding home; there is no necessity at least for Mr. Hartland to break his neck."

"No," said Sir Roger, laughing heartily; "though Hartland lives at Henbury, there is no *henpecker* there yet."

This sally was met by Miss Ferret with "Excellent, upon my honour! Lady Goodman, is'nt that the best thing you ever heard? Well," added our voluble *go-between*, "I thought that this would be the end of it, when you gentlemen wedged yourselves into that far window before dinner, and prosed about new moons, full moons,

and harvest moons, till you wearied the moon to sleep, and now you are left without any lamp in the sky."

To be brief, Mr. Hartland was easily prevailed upon. Mr. Gresham took his departure, and the circle at Colbrook, after partaking of a comfortable old fashioned supper, retired to their apartments. If all secrets must be discovered when we set about telling a story, we must reveal the fact that two of the party passed a restless night. How it happened may be thus accounted for.

Whatever may be thought, and however unnatural it may seem, that a man of forty-two should be visited by those agitations which the young imagine to belong exclusively to their fresh sensibilities, and the hacknied do not believe in at all, it will not appear incredible to those who are accustomed to look into the human heart with a philosophic eye, if we assert that Mr. Hartland's spirits were thrown into considerable flutter by the events of the past day.

Since his accession to an unexpected fortune he had heard many hints thrown out, both at

home and abroad, upon the propriety of his "settling in life;" and *any* thing often repeated will produce impression. How much more then a matter of such importance as matrimony! His old nurse used now to shake her head and say, "Ah! Sir, since my poor Missess is gone you looks quite lonesome." The tenants who came to visit their new landlord, as they drank his health, always tacked a good wife as the climax of their wishes for his prosperity; and he was assailed by all the old women of the parish, gentle and simple, with some allusion to his single state. The words old bachelor began to fret and gall him in a manner entirely unwonted. It was no wonder then, perhaps, that with a mind thus pre-disposed, the machinations of Miss Ferrett found the soil prepared and ready to aid their purpose. Several circumstances of the evening rose in a sort of pleasing phantasmagoria on Mr. Hartland's recollection. He thought Miss Robinson very agreeable and genteel, neither too young nor too old, lively without being all on wires, like Miss Ferrett, quiet

without being dull like some of the young ladies whom he had seen in the neighbourhood. As he continued to commune with his pillow, several obliging sentiments expressed towards him by Miss Robinson recurred to memory, and just as he at length fell off in a doze; the faint reminiscence of something concerning the funds glided in shadowy vision across his brain.

Miss Robinson had waking dreams the while of Mr. Hartland. She was five and thirty; he was of suitable age; she had five thousand pounds; a small provision to *live* upon in the decline of one's days, yet a snug little dower too, if well bestowed and carefully settled. Mr. Hartland's complexion was fine, his teeth superb, and his general air that of a very comely person. Altogether, Miss Robinson thought that she had not seen for a long time any one more amiable in appearance. Then he lost his money with such a good grace as promised well for domestic concord, and as *she* fell asleep the last words which she remembered were those of the not too refined Miss Ferret, when she wished

good-night at her chamber-door. "Take him, my dear, if you can catch him; depend upon it you may go farther and fare worse."

Aurora unbarred the East with her rosy fingers, and sent a flood of golden sunshine over the fields. Nothing is so cheering to the heart of man as fine weather, and though Samuel Johnson, of lexicographical memory, doubted the fact, we honestly believe that few inhabitants of this terrestrial ball are altogether uninfluenced by clear air and a fine day.

A ride to Henbury was proposed, accepted, and arranged. Mr. Hartland's groom was sent forward to proclaim approach, and a *quartetto*, composed of the lovers (for such we may venture already to call them), Sir Roger and Miss Ferret followed quickly after. A narrow part of the road soon afforded opportunity, of which advantage was taken, and a double tête-à-tête was the order of the cavalcade, till the gates of Henbury flew open to receive the visitors. The cork-tree, and every other tree, plant, herb, and flower, was duly displayed and appreciated. The interior was also pronounced

to be without a fault, and so complacently did the party feel towards each other, that Mr. Hartland, who thought himself bound as a true Knight to escort his fair guests half way back, was induced to go the other half through pure charity towards Sir Roger, who gave so many solid reasons for wishing to enjoy society while rheumatism would permit, that his neighbour, to say nothing of politeness, would have deemed it unchristian to refuse. So at Colbrook he dined again; again lost at whist, and again, deserted by the "conscious moon," ruminated on his pillow concerning the charms of Miss Robinson's person, mind, and manners.

Dull people must be told every tittle of a tale; but a lively reader, for whom alone we would fain weave the storied web, will anticipate results, and spare us the details of a courtship, brief as it was, which had its rise, progress, and conclusion in three short weeks; terminating a few days before the appointed period of Miss Robinson's visit to Sir Roger and Lady Goodman, in the regular proposals of Mr. Hartland of Henbury Lodge, to that young lady.

CHAPTER III.

> "I will dance and eat plums at your wedding."
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

It is said somewhere in the Spectator, that "a woman seldom asks advice before she buys her wedding clothes." Now Miss Robinson neither asked advice before nor after; for, being an orphan, and of full age, there was no necessity to go through any such ceremony; she therefore decided for herself, that having no aversion in the abstract towards the holy state of wedlock, she could not make a particular sacrifice of that liberty which she had not, perhaps, found such a panacea for all the evils of life as Poets and Romancers teach, in a better cause than the present. Mr. Hartland was every thing which a reasonable woman could desire in a spouse, and accordingly his suit was not rejected.

No projected alliance ever gave more general satisfaction; and not a single dissentient voice was raised against its prosperous completion, except that of Mrs. Bunn, the house-keeper at Henbury, who, in common with all persons holding the same situation under a bachelor's roof, never could abide the bare idea of "the Master's" marriage, even though it were to a Duchess in her own right.

On the first day, when Trotter the groom rode on with orders to have the best of every thing prepared for luncheon, and the gardener was desired to bring in the finest fruit that could be had, Mrs. Bunn augured ill of the message, which she considered symptomatic; but when it came to her being called upon for a fresh supply of linen, and informed moreover that Mr. Hartland was going back to Colbrook, her heart, as she expressed it, "died within her;" and not being able to find the hartshorn-bottle in a moment of such flurry, she is said to have had recourse to brandy, so completely were her spirits subdued by the prospect too fatally realized of a finished reign. To abdicate was

preferable, however, to being deposed; and when Mrs. Bunn's agitation subsided, she came to that conclusion, resolving to avoid the disgrace of a dismissal, and by resigning the seals of office, while affairs of higher interest occupied the mind of our Benedict, prevent too keen a scrutiny into past conduct. Thus ended the dynasty of Bunn; and we must forgive her for casting "a lingering look behind," as she quitted the "flesh pots" of Henbury, for which she seemed to have as decided a taste as ever Sancho discovered.

With this single exception, as has been observed, all was smooth assent; and great was the sensation produced through town and country, when Miss Ferrett, cantering her poney at a quicker gait than usual, suddenly drew up opposite to the post-office door, and communicated to an expectant group of some four or five *quidnuncs* who were waiting the arrival of the coach, that "every thing was settled." She was in her element; and in such a state of stimulus that she could scarcely controul the effervescence of her spirits. Finishing her pro-

clamation with "God save the King," she pushed forward to cry another "O yes!" at the milliner's and the apothecary's; after which she hastened home to set in movement sundry preparations in furtherance of the great event, which, with better foundation than is common in general to swelling pretensions, she justly considered as all "her own doing." We are usually partial to whatever owes its existence to ourselves, and therefore Miss Ferret's excitement was nothing extraordinary, and may be excused.

Our readers are by this time sufficiently acquainted with the *carte du pays* of Colbrook within and Colbrook without, to know in what part of the newspaper to look for the registry of a wedding conducted under the auspices of its goodly possessors and their auxiliaries. The sagacious and informed will not expect a detached paragraph, exhibiting such a host of Lords and Ladies that the happy pair are scarcely distinguishable in the brilliant mob; and which, were it not for the heading of "Marriage in High Life," might be mistaken

for the list of arrivals at a London hotel; but the announcement of *our* nuptial rites will be sought, and found in that column, which, at one comprehensive view, presents a picture of human life, and directs the moral eye from the cradle to the grave.

We must not anticipate, however; for much is to be done before the printer sets his types to the titles of Francis Hartland, Esq. of Henbury-lodge, and Harriet, eldest daughter of a goodly 'Squire, John Robinson by name, and gentleman by degree. Lady Goodman wrote to her friend Mrs. Palmer, to send patterns of all sorts from town; while Sir Roger, who was as much delighted as Miss Ferret with the coming event, set to work with Mr. Points, the Solicitor, who rode off post haste to Colbrook at three several times, as if he was an express; and when arrived, bustled into the breakfast-parlour (for there was no library, there being no readers at Colbrook,) with such stir and importance, and made notes of the intended settlement with such pompous solemnity, that an inhabitant of another planet, suddenly intro-

duced to the scene, might be fully borne out in the supposition, that our "special" was employed in taking depositions against a state prisoner, chargeable, at the very least, with design to overset the Constitution and compass the death of our beloved Sovereign.

Let it not be imagined that Miss Ferret's was a sinecure office, during this season of occupation. On the contrary, her dwelling in the market-place might be styled the very centre, heart, or focus, of these interesting proceedings. Her drawing room was the place of congress for dress-makers, stay-makers, shoe-makers, and plain workers, while her bed-chamber was the repository of boxes and bundles without end or measure, from town and country. These same apartments were likewise the scene of all the putting off, and trying on: the fault-finding and approval; the lively criticism on shapes and colours; fashionable and unfashionable, becoming and unbecoming, which naturally belongs most peculiarly to that period of grand climacteric in a lady's wardrobe, which Miss Robinson's was now to undergo; not to mention

that Henbury Lodge, being out of the mail-coach line, Miss Ferret's abode was, moreover, a bank of deposit for innumerable and cumbersome packages from tailors, hatters, hosiers, "*et hoc genus*," &c. insomuch that the pains-taking partisan, to whose official exertions this chapter is principally indebted for its subject, might be justly compared to the supple animal whose name she bore, when, with all its prying energies elate, and with persevering industry prosecuting its vocation in the bowels of the earth, the light crumbling soil falls in on every side, and incloses the ferret's slender form, overwhelmed in the destruction which itself had worked. But as it is not requisite to the appositeness of a simile that the analogy should agree in all its parts, we are happy to think that *our* Ferret had well grounded prospect of outliving her temporary sepulture, and hailing the bright beam of Hymen's torch to guide her through the lumbering piles of paper parcels by which she was almost suffocated; though it must on the other hand be confessed that, after she had leisure to reflect in the still hour of retirement

on that busy crisis, she has been frequently heard to say, that nothing short of the most devoted friendship could possibly have sustained her; and in after times Mr. and Mrs. Hartland were often reminded of all they owed to her unwearied zeal.

As Miss Ferret studied the *portable* in all things, her wisdom was condensed in aphorisms, amongst which, "there is a time for all things," instructed her to choose the period of Christmas more especially for stirring up the memory, and the gratitude of her friends, when a plenitude of game, mince-pies, spiced meats, bottled ale, and other seasonable reflections, furnished festive opportunity of lightening a burthen on the heart, by reciprocating obligations on the stomach. "Turn about is fair play," was another maxim which lent its aid on these occasions.

At length matters appeared to be winding up to a point: Miss Robinson's paraphernalia, after due exhibition, and the sly purloining of many a useful hint, snatched hastily with scissars and brown paper, from collar, cape, and cuffs, was all sent home; and Mr. Points witnessed the

due execution of the marriage articles at Colbrook, where Sir Roger and Lady Goodman had from the first signified their wishes that the approaching solemnity should be performed. The only hitch which arose, (just enough to prove that every human scheme is less than perfect,) occurred in the impossibility of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon's attendance on the auspicious ceremony. Mrs. Gordon was younger sister to Miss Robinson, and lived in Aberdeenshire, but indisposition would not permit her to leave home, and her husband would not go without her; so it was ordained that Sir Roger, in quality of guardian, should perform the father's part, and that the bride and bridegroom should make a visit to their relations in Scotland, before they sat down for life at Henbury Lodge.

These matters being adjusted, it only remained to fix the day and the hour for our espousals, which was accordingly done, and now succeeded cares of no less magnitude.

It has been hinted that Sir Roger Goodman's mansion was larger than his means of living in it. *Space*, indeed, was the first idea by which a

stranger was struck on entering the doors; for the fact was, that besides the really capacious dimensions of each apartment, there was such a dearth of furniture, that the eye was not in-interrupted in its progress as it travelled over them. Four walls, handsomely pannelled with carved work of green and gold, enclosed an area, which was called the billiard-room, with no other apparent object than that of exciting attention, to remark that not a sign of table, mace, or ball, was to be seen. In like manner the *place* of a saloon was to be found with nothing in it, and a chapel without provision for prayers. The "state" bed-chambers were reserved for such momentous purposes that they were never used at all, and therefore beds were superfluous; so they had not any in them.

From this outline it follows that the disposable forces of hospitality were confined at Colbrook within very straightened limits, notwithstanding the large size of the building; and an entertainment in this mausoleum of ancient grandeur, like a poem which we remember to have seen somewhere or other, in imitation of Ossian,

might very appropriately be 'yclept a "feast of empty shells." Miss Ferret, however, undertook the arrangements under the controlling direction of Lady Goodman, and began her operations with the encouraging cheer, "Faint heart never won fair Lady. We must put our best foot foremost."

To work she set, and what with rummaging out, scrubbing up, turning, twisting, nailing, scouring, dying, and borrowing, things were put in some sort of order, and accommodation provided for a numerous company at breakfast. It was the custom of Lady Goodman's day, for the bride and bridegroom to sit in full dress during a week, and receive congratulations from all the neighbouring gentry: and sorely did she regret the impossibility of reviving so venerable a pageant on the present happy occasion; but there was no option, and fortunately the fashion of setting out in a chaise and four, relieved her from the mortification of confessing that the festivities of a hymeneal scene could not be protracted under her roof beyond the cake-cutting hour.

The waste suites of unfurnished apartments were decked out with green branches, and flowers disposed in arches and alcoves, so that Miss Ferret converted the whole house into one mighty bower. She rooted out some old moth-eaten banners, which were kept as an heir-loom in the attic story, where, reposing under lock and key, they bore mouldering testimony to the ancestral valour of Sir Roger's blood; also a stand of colours which had been presented to his father, who raised a regiment of Yeomanry; some Free-Masonry insignia, which glittered with embroidery of tarnished gold and silver; elks' horns, which had been sent as a curiosity; two American bows; a pair of snow shoes; some halberts, and a trumpet which were taken in the rebellion of forty-five, with other articles which had not seen the light for years, but now came forward, however incongruously, to vary the sylvan decorations, and were judiciously commingled with family portraits in massive frames; an ivory ship, which, covered with a glass bell, made a great figure; a canoe; two plaster-of-paris cupids; a leaden fawn; Harle-

quin and Columbine; Neptune and Hebe of the same material, and King William on horseback, well executed in bronze; so as altogether to produce an imposing and animated effect along a vista of the entire front, including corridors, and enliven the "eternal shade" which would otherwise have resulted from the great quantity of laurel, spruce, fir, and other evergreens forced into company to fill the void.

Poor Lady Goodman, who knew better things than this ignorant medley exhibited, sighed as she acquiesced in all Miss Ferret's manifestations of taste, which would have been better suited to the preparations for enacting a puppet-shew in a country barn, than the embellishment of a fine feudal palace of the olden time, inhabited by those who boasted armorial bearings and descent from the brave and fair of other days. There was no help for it, however. It was Hobson's choice, and no alternative presented itself, were Miss Ferret's suggestions repressed, except absolute vacuity. Now Lady Goodman loved Miss Robinson affectionately, and could not endure to appear deficient in

friendship, while her excellent heart overflowed with kindness. She therefore preferred giving free scope to the fantastical vagaries of a merry-andrew, to seeming less than she really was, to Sir Roger's ward, and her own protegée.

It was in the servant and equipage department, that the greatest difficulties arose. A solitary domestic, styled butler, but who exercised no dominion, for the best reason, namely, that he had no subjects, was the sole attendant at Colbrook. Dressed in a suit of snuff-coloured clothes which had once been black, he answered the hall-door bell. In jacket of fustian, with turned up sleeves, he might next be seen, cleaning knives and forks; or should

"the earlier season lead
To the tanned haycock in the mead,"

you might again behold this worthy jack-of-all-trades, armed with rake and pitch-fork, tossing high and wide the meadow's fragrant crop. An old coachman, who performed as many parts in the stable as old Hasty did within the house, completed the male part of the establishment, and his rusty livery and antique wig were in per-

fect keeping with the heavy machine which it was his lot to guide, and the ancient pair of roan Barbarys which drew it. "What a turn-out for a wedding!" exclaimed Miss Ferret, as she gazed upon the carriage which was to appear on the following day first in the bridal procession.

"My dear Lady Goodman, I am ready to sink at the idea of such a tub being drawn up at your door, and really know not what to do. So few servants too!—it is quite confounding on such an occasion."

"My dear," replied Lady Goodman, "we must make the best of it. Your genius has done much, but you cannot make our old coach any other than it is. It is vain to fret yourself about what admits of no remedy."

"I cannot change, but I will manage yet to conceal it," answered Miss Ferret, who flitted off to give her directions and arrange her measures for the morning, which was ushered in by a brilliant dawn.

No sooner was the sun above the horizon, than our fair field marshal persuaded Sir Roger

that he should go on to church, and be ready to hand the bride elect from her carriage, adding, that she hoped he would not lose a moment in sending back his own to accommodate some of the rest of the party. Though Sir Roger did not see any reason for what he was desired to do, and had no mind to sit by himself in the vestry-room for such a length of time as was contemplated by Miss Ferret, yet she was so urgent, that she gave him no time for deliberation, and half pushing, half entreating, had him fairly shut up in the coach and whirled with unaccustomed celerity from the door, before he had power to recollect that he should inevitably have a fit of the rheumatism in consequence of so long a sitting in a draught of air, much cooler than that of his own house. But David, who was perched up on high upon an immense old-fashioned hammer-cloth, large enough to bear the city arms on every side, like the lord mayor's equipage, received strict orders *not to hear* if his master called, but proceed, blow high, blow low, to Weston church. Now he argued, that as weddings do not occur every day, and

Miss Ferret was chief governor on the present occasion, it might be better to obey her implicitly. Besides he was in the habit of turning a deaf ear to the word "stop," as having no footman except on great emergencies, when Hasty the butler stepped up behind, he knew that his porpoise-like body must be put in movement were he to indulge every whim of halting here and there; and a descent from the altitude at which David sat was no trifling exertion to a man "so scant of breath" as he was. He grumbled, indeed, *sotto voce*, at not "heading the procession," as he said; but Miss Ferret assured him that though she had an offer of all the carriages to marshal in whatever manner she thought proper, she would not suffer Sir Roger to be driven in any vehicle but his own, or by any less careful charioteer than his coachman. She likewise informed David that on account of the honour which she designed him of enacting *avant courier* on the occasion, she had made his wedding favours twice as large as those of any body else, which was true, for she used three yards of extraordinary white satin

ribbon with silver edges, in this instance to cover certain defects in David's hat and coat.

This argument prevailed, insomuch that he took his seat aloft with much self-complacency, and from the prodigious breadth of his chest, and the monstrous size of the star-like platforms which Miss Ferret pinned upon it, quite as large as the sod in a thrush's cage, David looked at a little distance, so like a target, that had the archers been out, he might have received an arrow through the heart, before he could have had time to bless himself. He was next commissioned to return from Weston by a circuitous route, the pretext for which was to deliver a message at the house of a work-woman who had not brought home all Miss Robinson's linen, but the real object of which was to delay the carriage till all the party should have proceeded, and so avoid the display of that unwieldy concern amongst the gay chariots and landaus of the neighbouring gentry, several of whom graced our hymeneals with their presence. Miss Ferret then took occasion, when the company

were all assembled on the steps just ready for departure, to say aloud to Lady Goodman, "Upon my word, your ladyship has left us this morning without a single servant to do any thing. Two gone on with Sir Roger; one despatched to order post horses, as if a note would not have been sufficient; and there is Barnett who has already drunk so many healths to this happy event, that he was not able to stand straight, so I have sent him off to bed."

So saying, she bustled and fidgeted about till by one contrivance or other, she got the whole train in motion, and contrived to bring them all back again, without giving any one leisure to remark how or by which way they returned to Colbrook, where a beautiful breakfast awaited them.

What with cutting cake, sticking pins, wrapping, and directing parcels, with compliments from Mrs. Hartland, and sealing packets of white gloves, while the gentlemen strolled through the beautiful, but neglected demesne of Colbrook, Time flew on more rapid wing than he is used to plume upon a wedding-day in the

country, till a "trim-built" travelling carriage with trunks, cap-case, and imperial, drove up to the door. Sir Roger handed in the bride, who was followed by her *Caro* and a shower of congratulations; and off wheeled the *nouveaux Mariés* towards Drumcairn, the romantic abode in Aberdeenshire of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon. Part of the company left Colbrook immediately after, while a select assembly was retained to dine and drink a bumper toast to the health and happiness of Henbury Lodge.

Here again Miss Ferret's talents were felt, if not acknowledged, and perhaps her chief ability lay in the circumstance, that while dulness and ceremony, which are the bane of English society vanished before her, she wisely took especial care to seem no more than a useful instrument in the hands of others, though in reality she was the governing principle of all that ease and hilarity which her presence inspired. Miss Ferret might be compared to an able mechanic who, discovering the causes of inertion in whatever piece of workmanship is submitted to his inspection, clears away rust, removes impedi-

ments, rectifies the balance, oils the joints, and sets every spring into active play, without presuming to claim any merit in the contrivance that should interfere with the patentee. Had she not possessed such perfect tact, (which is a quality much more dependent on quick natural perception than the refinements of education,) that she always gave other people that credit which she deserved herself, she would soon have been taught to feel her inferiority; but she never was suspected, and people thought that they were particularly well, cheerful, and agreeable without supposing for an instant that they were indebted to her influence. She was by nature all that Lord Chesterfield vainly endeavoured to make his son by art, and knew that the whole secret of popularity consists in putting every one into good humour with himself.

The dinner was abundant, and its deficiency in *setting off* was but little observed where all the guests were kindly disposed. In fact that paltry criticism which is the terror and scourge of a country neighbourhood, is much oftener the

offspring of stupor than malevolence. Keep a company alive, and they will seldom be able to tell whether your damask is of Scotch or Hamburgh manufacture, your china, Indian or Worcester, your glass, cut or plain. People only ask to be *happy*, and how this is accomplished is never enquired into; but if tongues are not employed eyes will be busy. Miss Ferret was aware of this, and her vigilance was unremitting. The boldest stroke, and one at which Sir Roger's mind at first revolted, succeeded to admiration, and green gooseberry wine in long necked bottles passed muster for sparkling champagne.

The trick had been played at a great race dinner, and Miss Ferret's convincing argument for making an experiment of a like nature at Colbrook, was contained in the following laconicism, "what has been, may be." Sir Roger succumbed, and no one detected the fraud. "Depend upon it," said Miss Ferret, "that all the French wines are made at home, and you are no greater cheat than your wine merchant."

The young danced, the elders played whist,

carriages were heard rolling in the court, the party dispersed, and as all things must, sooner or later, come to a conclusion, thus ended the wedding-day, and Miss Ferret had laid the plan of another ere the sun was set.

CHAPTER IV.

"———What now remains
But that once more we tempt the wat'ry plains,
And wandering homewards, seek our safety hence."
DRYDEN.

AMONGST the many contested questions which perplex conversation, and seem destined to remain undecided, is comparison between the sum of happiness derivable by those who are easily pleased, from frequently recurring and commonly procurable resources, and that resulting from the seldom tasted but vivid raptures of the fastidious, who, too refined for average gratification, find life a desert, in which, like "angel visits few and long between," the thinly scattered spangles of verdure glow with intensity of freshness amid surrounding gloom. We confess that our own minds suffered vacillation upon

this important topic, till, having witnessed the every-day felicity of Henbury Lodge, we were enabled to cast the make-weight of its *beau rivant* into the scale of "little things."

As a flat road, however, admits of quick driving, we shall not detain the reader unmercifully in describing a scene which presented no alterations of light and shade, no moral vicissitudes of hill and dale, to vary the landscape; but satisfy ourselves with a short sketch of connubial contentment in a welcome-home to Mr. and Mrs. Hartland, who after a brief aberration from their domestic settlement, returned to the delights of clipped hedges, rolled terrace, and trim bowers.

It may be remembered that our wedded pair had each passed the term when people of both sexes in the presumption of life's springtide, talk of marriage as a common event which "comes to all;" and toss their fortunes to and fro, with lavish prodigality, altogether unprophetic of succeeding dearth.

This was precisely the case with *ci-devant* Miss Robinson, who, having rejected a crowd of aspirants, had begun to feel a chill frost creeping

over the season of youth, and the joy of seeing herself now prosperously "*established*," and contemplating a well sized, well furnished mansion, in which she ruled by the style and title of "*Mrs.* Hartland," produced a degree of self-gratulation proportioned to the fears which had preceded her present elevation. She was a common place, prudent woman, and we must not be too severe on the weaknesses which were we, however, so stupid as not to observe, we should exercise no charity in forgiving. We do confess then, though not in the spirit of ill-nature, that no happiness ever transcended that of our recent matron, when seated in a new post-chaise, the pannels of which were like mirrors in which you might have shaved yourself, every strap and brace polished to black satin, postilion light and dapper, dressed in a fresh suit of green and silver, horses prancing, sun shining, she took her joyous course along her own smoothly gravelled approach, armed with a ticket-case of carved ivory in her hand, to perform the first circuit of country visits in return for those which had been unsparingly lavished

on the late event. Neither did this gladness perish through its vivacity, as is the case with the generality of powerful stimulants, but there was a constantly recurring bliss in the sounds of "My *own* house, my *own* carriage, my *own* servants," &c. which produced new impression at every repetition.

Mr. Hartland's situation was not less enviable. Having passed all his youthful prime without considering marriage as practicable, he had thought less than any body during early life of changing his condition; and since he had attained competency, and became desirous of uniting himself suitably to a virtuous partner, the difficulties of seeking, finding, choosing, proposing, and wedding, rose upon his view like Alps beyond Alps, and presented such a formidable barrier against hope, that he could not see how the matter was ever to be undertaken, much less how it would ever come to pass.

The husband, therefore, was just as much enchanted as the wife. He felt himself raised in the scale of creation; he was now a person of more consequence than he had ever been be-

fore. Then his affections, which had been arrested by his mother's death, and which might be said to have suffered a blockade since that event, were all set flowing again with redoubled tenderness and activity. His former poverty, too, having prevented him from being an object of competition, his vanity had never been excited, and he was a total stranger, in his own person, to those attentions, which, we are sorry to say, are often disgustingly paid to men by the fair sex, when rank or fortune furnishes motive for entrapping them. Mr. Hartland's gratitude, therefore, to Miss Robinson, for having married him, was as sincere as it was unbounded; and thus this favoured pair were, in the language of the nursery tales of olden time, "as happy as the day is long;" reminding us of the spider, who spinning her web from her own vitals, "lives along the line" of her own daily occupation; or (as we are given to comparison), the Hartlands frequently suggested to our memory the Epicurean aspiration of the celebrated Quin, "Oh, that I had a throat half a mile in length, and palate all the way." Now, the moral palate of Hen-

bury's inhabitants extended to the utmost verge of their possessions; and they might be said to taste and relish whatever they found in their path.

They had neither of them seen much of the world, and neither knew any thing of that high and towering intellect, which, like the lofty eagle, quits the level of the plain, and builds its eyrie in an upper world all its own. The Hartlands had sharp common understandings, good nature, and discretion; but they rose not above mediocrity, and were of that class whose *natural* walk is on the earth. They were *busy* all day long about every thing; interested alike in the gravest or minutest concerns, and never tortured their brains with any subject of contemplation beyond the reach of sense. Healthful in mind, as well as in body; gay, and continually employed; they talked, and walked, and rode, and drove, dined out, and gave dinners at home, and were never weary of themselves, or of the society around them.

But the cup of existence is never unmixed. If the wormwood leaf float not on its surface, it

will be found lying at the bottom. Three years glided by. The first was one of such novelty and incessant excitement, that no yawning chasm was seen, felt, or understood; the second was sometimes slightly tinged by anxiety lest the pleasant hedge-rows of Henbury Lodge should one day encircle another race, and stranger feet should press its smiling lawns; but when a third year closed its barren account with blighted hopes, expectation died away; and though Mr. and Mrs. Hartland were still the envy of the region in which they grew, and were universally declared to be worthy of an annual flitch, it was nevertheless remarked, and especially by Miss Ferret, whose penetration stood high in public regard, that "all was not right at Henbury."

At first her hints conveyed nothing more determinate, than was communicated in the adage, "All is not gold that glisters;" but this had the effect of setting those who were less intimate than herself with the friends whose undefined sorrows she zealously published, writhing with curiosity, while her own 'gained time for such inquisition as should bring her to the true cause

of that change, the effects of which only her quick eye had as yet discerned. Besides, it was more consonant with Miss Ferret's idea of *true friendship* to set other wits upon the discovery of any thing disagreeable, should such exist, than *directly* to proclaim it herself; and therefore every purpose was gained of stimulating the industry of other gossips, while her inuendos, darkly dropped, persuaded the entire vicinage that she knew a great deal more than she chose to reveal, and was only withheld from promulgating to the full extent of her information, by "the sincere regard which she entertained for the Hartlands."

But what is there which a union of talents and diligence will not compass and achieve? Miss Ferret's were soon crowned with success, and happily the cloud that overcast the horizon of Henbury was of that nature which might be trumpeted to the four corners of the earth (if indeed the round world have such convenient recesses for playing hide and seek), without the violation of those feelings which our busy blab professed for her *protegés.*

It was well known throughout the country that both Mr. and Mrs. Hartland were particularly partial to children; so much so, that whenever they appeared, the fond mothers of the neighbourhood used constantly to ring the nursery chimes for their edification or amusement, and many a morning call has been inconveniently protracted to the visitors, for the purpose of "seeing the baby," whose tedious delay after summons issued, and elaborate dress when produced, proved the complete metamorphosis which it had undergone in the interval, before it was considered to be fitly attired for exhibition in the drawing-room. But Miss Ferret, happening to be in company one day when the large family of a neighbouring curate was mentioned, remarked that Mrs. Hartland, who never gave herself the habit of *generalizing* in conversation, replied rather pensively, "Alas! how unequally the gifts of Providence are distributed!"

Miss Ferret expressed herself to have felt as if she had been *shot* when this observation fell from her friend; and it furnished a clue by

which the whole labyrinth of her secret thoughts came to be developed. Pursuing the light which now glimmered, Miss Ferret immediately acquiesced in the justice of the remark, and proceeded to tell of a gentleman and lady who were the happiest people in the world, "*all but* having no heirs to their fine estate," and added, "They have been married fully five years, and you may *suppose* what their feelings are; for we must acknowledge that it is the most natural thing in the world to wish that one's name should not be cut off; and, as I often say, an extinguisher put over one's grave is enough to lower one's spirits; for the grave in itself is sufficiently gloomy in all conscience, without putting an end to the whole *stock*, who might live a little longer, all at a blow."

Mrs. Hartland sighed, while a faint colour was observed to glance across her countenance. After a slight pause, she said, as though she had often pondered the subject, "Yes, hope deferred, they say, maketh the heart sick."

The whole mystery was now unravelled, or as Miss Ferret expressed the same idea in her

peculiar phraseology, "the cat was out of the bag;" and it was evident that the Henbury *thorn* stood revealed, in the childless condition of that house. This point once established, it may be imagined that joy was at its height, on the actual expectation of an event, the delay of which only seemed *now* to the grateful hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Hartland to have been expressly ordained for the purpose of enhancing its value. How readily we acknowledge the providence of divine interposition when we are pleased!

But we cannot stop to moralize, it is our duty to recount; and if we could bring our minds into full sympathy with those whose history we are narrating, there are few subjects of sufficient importance to alienate attention from the theme of our present consideration. The dread of disappointment rendered Mrs. Hartland very cautious in divulging her hopes; but at length prospects of the most gratifying nature opened to her view, and Miss Ferret received permission to diffuse tidings which appeared to tell the acmé of human felicity. Doctors and apothe-

caries, nurses and nurse-tenders, frocks, pinnafores, cradles, and caps, tops and bottoms, goats' whey, rennet-whey, asses'-milk, cows'-milk, and a thousand other appliances equally interesting of this important season, which was now unequivocally approaching, absorbed the thoughts, and occupied the conversation at Henbury. Mrs. Hartland reclined upon a sofa, and issued her orders from thence through the faithful Ferret, with as much pomp and ceremony as ever hung upon the Ottoman Divan; while Mr. Hartland's anxious office was to forestal the newspapers, seize upon the letter-bag, and prepare every visitor by regular instruction upon the topics of their discourse, lest the slightest imprudence in communicating the current rumours of the day, might disturb the nervous system of his wife.

To this end, he generally took his station in an anti-room in which a sort of probationary noviciate was performed, and people, after being examined, admonished, and duly qualified, received admission tickets to the presence chamber.

As the fulness of time advanced, several

weighty consultations were held, which called forth every power of taste and understanding which the Hartlands possessed, to meet the opposite arguments which were propounded in them. Two debates of longer and more difficult deliberation than all preceding, were however happily adjusted to the entire satisfaction of the parties, and the perfect reconcilement of contending opinions. In one of these it was decreed that if a son were to bless the parent eyes, he should be christened Algernon Robinson; and if the soft smiles of a daughter were destined to awaken love, rather than ambition, Melasina was to be her name. Mr. Hartland's father had unfortunately been called Peter, Mrs. Hartland's progenitor Jacob; and the reader will admit that two more impracticable appellations were never unluckily brought together to perplex the counsels of a pair who were looking forward with eager raptures to the baptismal font, and habitually impressed at the *same time*, with the propriety of sending family echoes to the latest posterity.

How to harmonize sounds without compro-

mising respect was the question, and no small exertion of skill did it require to balance the pros and cons. Many cogent reasons were urged by Sir Roger and Lady Goodman for the regular descent of Peter, Jacob, or both; while a hint, which gave a climax to perplexity was thrown out by the latter, who said that she should not think the addition of her worthy husband's name an *unnatural* appendage by way of compliment to him. Mrs. Hartland's rest was broken by this harassing choice of evils. At last she resolved on bursting her fetters, and declared the bold resolve to waive precedent, and not in compliance with an antiquated prejudice, entail on future generations the quaint appellations, which she determined to sacrifice to what she considered the true interests of her son.

"The junction of sur-names," said she, "may appease the shades of his dead grandfathers, and Goodman may bring up the rear. Whether boy or girl, the only sounds which need be uttered shall delight the ear, and all the rest may

be smuggled away under initial letters. I am *resolved* on Algernon or Melasina."

Mr. Hartland was in the habit of acquiescing in the decrees of his better half: and remembered how pleasantly his favourite Sterne has declared that a man who might have made a flourishing figure in the world as an Alexander might be Nicodemus'd into nothing. He therefore gave his assent and consent to Algernon for the male sex, Melasina for the female, and the debate was at an end.

The second dispute of magnitude which was settled about the same time, related to sponsors. Mr. Hartland belonged to a noble house, and the Earl of Marchdale, who held a high office under government, was his first cousin. Those who know any thing of the world, are aware that consanguinity to great men, unless in the nearest degrees, is more frequently a disadvantage than the contrary. A brother cannot be left in obscurity, and perhaps a nephew may have some chance of preferment, but cousins are generally shaken off and made to know their

distance. Mr. Hartland's mother had once made an effort to seek for her son the countenance and protection of his noble relative, but received such peremptory repulse that a second experiment was never hazarded.

Times however were changed, and circumstances altered likewise. It had reached Lord Marchdale's ears that Mr. Hartland was no longer a poor man; and curiosity prompted him to ask where the newly acquired property of his kinsman was situated, which led to information that it lay in a certain county where he wished to increase his influence. Something a kin to shame at the recollection of former rough treatment exerted towards his relation, withheld his Lordship from offering his congratulations on an accession of fortune which might immediately suggest a remembrance of his former unkindness; but he formed the benevolent design of seizing on the first convenient opportunity for some token of conciliatory recognition of his cousin. Mr. Hartland's marriage would have afforded an auspicious occasion, but unluckily Lord Marchdale was making a tour on

the Continent when that event took place, and to have written an epithalamium after his return, might not have had the desired effect.

"I should not have thanked any one for wishing *me* joy on my nuptials, six months after date," thought his Lordship; and acting in this instance by the rule of doing to others, as he desired others should do towards him, he waited —and waited not in vain. Actuated by the motives to which we have alluded, to make more minute inquisition into the affairs of his uncle's only son than had been his wont, he became acquainted with the bright hopes which, like a morning in Spring, were breaking over the destiny of one whose prosperity promised now to transcend his own, for he was childless. Lord Marchdale therefore lost no more time, but hastened on receiving the intelligence to write the following epistle:

"Dear Frank,

"I am not one of those who advocate the perpetuation of family feuds. Your poor father and mine never agreed, but that is no reason

why you and I should feel any hostility towards each other, though I fear that appearances are against me. My utter inability to serve you, when Mrs. Hartland applied to me in your behalf, having formerly obliged me reluctantly to disappoint her wishes, I learn now, with sincere satisfaction, that you no longer stand in need of aid, but are enabled proudly to raise your head amongst England's best protectors, her resident country gentlemen. I hear also the interesting news, that your happiness is likely to experience increase through an unexpected event; and am desirous that the young stranger should be a bond of re-union between us. If a boy, I wish that you may name him Algernon; and represent me at his baptism as godfather. If Mrs. Hartland should present you with a daughter, Lady Marchdale requests me to announce her disposition to stand sponsor. Believe me, dear Frank,

"Very truly yours, MARCHDALE."

The familiar style of this letter did not impose on Mr. Hartland, who saw through the

kindliness of its contents; but it was agreed in full conclave, that it would be imprudent in the extreme to repel this advance; and as the possibility of succeeding to the Marchdale titles and estates had often in secret served as foundation for air built castles, which soothed Mrs. Hartland's solitary hours, she had already anticipated a part of her noble connexion's petition, by resolving on giving her child, should it prove a son, the only high sounding name in the family. Nothing could be more flattering to maternal ambition than the coincidence, which resolved all past solicitude into the pleasing certainty, that the expected progeny was to be ushered into life with due pretension. If a son, as it was earnestly prayed that the offspring should prove, Lord Marchdale and Sir Roger Goodman were to be his sureties; if a girl, Lady Marchdale and Lady Goodman were to perform the like office; and Miss Ferret, of whose adhesive assiduities it was impossible to get rid, was to be an honorary or supplemental corps of reserve. Nothing would tempt her to abandon the honour of "standing for the child;"

and, to pacify her, Mrs. Hartland consented to her bearing it to the font, where she hoped that her over-zealous friend might be mistaken for a mere proxy.

All things being prepared, and the minds of all composed into tranquillity, Mrs. Hartland felt the moment arrived which was to crown her hopes and raise her consequence. But an event of such importance deserves a separate Chapter, and therefore we close this. Muffle the knocker, scatter straw round the house and offices, forbid all approach of horse or wheel that might disturb the anxious hour, and commit the invalid, with our blessing, to her medical attendants.

CHAPTER V.

"He talks to me, who never had a son."—KING JOHN.

WE remember to have been shown once upon a time, as a marvellous curiosity, the stump of a large bay-tree, which had been cut down to make way for certain architectural improvements, and actually converted into a chopping-block, in which capacity it was employed during several years; but at length the family, to whom it appertained, quitted their dwelling, and the aforesaid stump, which had not been defunct, but only slumbering, was cast into a heap of earth, where, fertilized by the beams of the sun and the dews of the morning, it struck root amid the garden rubbish, and sent forth branches which flourished proudly, and spread their verdant foliage to the wondering skies. What joyful surprise would this neglected trunk have expressed had power of speech been granted!

and with what grateful pride would it not have called on the admiring universe to behold and glorify its transformation!

Some such sentiments as we are supposing to have emanated from our bay tree, glowed in the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Hartland as they gazed in rapture on a boy of uncommon symmetry and beauty; and, forgetful of the lavish prodigality of that vivifying principle which is employed at every moment in giving life from the palace to the cottage, the cottage to the kennel, and the kennel downwards to the lowest grade of organised existence, thanked Heaven with such alacrity of transport as seemed to intimate that they considered the effort of nature which animated the vital energies of Henbury as astonishing and unexpected as that which caused the chopping-block to put forth leaves and blossoms.

The innocent vanity which Mrs. Hartland had formerly felt at finding herself a wife, dwindled into insignificance in comparison with the elation of her spirits when the dignity of mother was added to her former honours; and the words

"*son and heir*" might be read in every look, and traced in every gesture in characters which seemed to say, that none but herself had ever produced this mighty combination.

We have formerly stated, that literature was not the prevailing taste of the neighbourhood in which Henbury was planted, and as it is a common rule "to do as the Romans do while one is at Rome," Mr. and Mrs. Hartland may, for all we can tell to the contrary, have suppressed their own inclination to accommodate their manners and habits to the fashion of those amongst whom they dwelt. Certain it is that, from whatever cause it proceeded, there was an abstinence from books at Henbury till the birth of Algernon Robinson Goodman Hartland, and though his father had gone through school and university, and his mother played well enough for carpet dancers, sang a little, painted birds and flowers on velvet, and worked like a Moravian, neither the one or the other found time, amid the multiplicity of their daily pursuits, for reading.

The revolution which was effected by the

little stranger's arrival was therefore the more striking. Every thing now was made subservient to the one great leading object. During the first year after this agreeable surprise, Henbury appeared a temple dedicated to Lucina, in which all the insignia of a new birth were displayed in cradle and pillows, saucepans and panada, blankets and wraps. Whichever way the eye were turned, the present deity of the place reigned from the attic to the basement story; and all distinct purposes, and applications of the several apartments were set aside for a season, to render the dwelling a universal nursery. Then came on the time of go-carts and corals; and every publication on teething, vaccination, and each disease to which infant flesh is heir, poured from the press by all the coaches, as if authors and printers were in league to pay their court to Mr. and Mrs. Hartland.

Three years passed away, and with them the scaffolding which, becoming unnecessary, was now thrown aside. The young Algernon, who, it must be confessed, was beautiful as we are taught to believe the little god of love, happily

surmounted the host of enemies who take their stand at the entrance-gate of life to oppose the mortal wayfarer, and was the admiration of all beholders, as well as the centre of all joy and pride to his parents. He was a child of extraordinary loveliness and most noble bearing; and fortunately for him his father and mother had often remarked, that the peasant children were a healthier race than the offspring of a higher class, which procured for him the inestimable privilege of breathing fresh air, and exercising his little limbs out of doors.

The cares of home became gradually so engrossing as to wean Mr. and Mrs. Hartland from the social circle, of which they had hitherto been the chief pillar and support, in their neighbourhood. They were now employed from morning till night in studying plans of education, mooting the comparative merits and demerits of schools, canvassing the question of public and private instruction, discussing the respective characters of Oxford and Cambridge, and laying schemes for futurity, as though time were to have no end.

The natural consequence of these things was a considerable loss of popularity. People began to think both Mr. and Mrs. Hartland, who had been prime and general favourites, grown dull and selfish, forgetting that it was selfishness which passed the rigorous decree in adjudging that disagreeable quality to them. Mrs. Hartland, who never till now talked of books, soon obtained the opprobious appellation of a Blue, and all Miss Ferret's efforts were unavailing to conciliate those who could not bear to think that the Hartlands were happy enough to do without them.

Jemima, however, though she did her best to obtain forgiveness for her friends, did not fail to warn them in private of their improvidence. "Out of sight out of mind," was an apothegm which she urged with reiterated pathos, to deter the inhabitants of Henbury from renouncing the world, which she assured them "could not be drawn on and off like a glove." Nothing, in fact, cou'd be more hostile to Miss Ferret's views than divisions and schisms, which, by splitting a neighbourhood into parties, diminished its gene-

ral hospitality; or those withdrawings from society through sickness or sorrow, which lessened the gregarious tendencies of the people amongst whom she lived. We may therefore give her full credit for not leaving, as she herself expressed it, "a stone unturned" to bring our pair of recluses to reason, and induce them to seek their felicity where she found her own, namely, in the festive coterie. But Mrs. Hartland in the course of her new studies had, some how or other, stumbled upon the remarkable sentence which Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, when a boy, wrote with a pencil at the bottom of a map of Riga, demonstrative of those talents which were one day to astonish the world: "Dieu me l'a donnée et le diable ne me l'otera pas," and with maternal energy she replied in these celebrated words, intimating by their appropriation to her own case, the same heroic resolutions which inspired the Swede, to preserve that which had been granted to *her* arms.

"My dear Jemima," added she, unconsciously drawing up her head as she spoke, "there is nothing easier than for people to

talk who are not mothers. I cannot perform by halves, the momentous duty which it has pleased heaven to devolve upon me. The sacred task can only be fulfilled by an entire devotion, and we must give ourselves up to the faithful discharge of this awful trust. Lady Goodman, too, has never known what it is to be a mother (raising her head still higher); and really, my dear, it is impossible, even for the best intentioned of one's friends who are *inexperienced*, to enter into the tremendous responsibilities of a parent."

"No, thank heaven," answered Miss Ferret; "I know only by hearsay of the great pangs and perils, through the martyrdom of which you boast your new title; though our curate Mr. Pew, who had been but just appointed before your confinement, seeing me at your side when I accompanied you to the communion-table, stupidly churched me also, and gave me a share in all your thanksgivings for a son and heir. But depend upon it, my dear friend, that you will be tired of all this sort of thing by and by, and wish that you had not affronted

your neighbours. Remember, after all said and done, that there cannot be any *great* distinction in bringing a bantling into the world, when every beggar-woman in the parish has a troop at her heels. Your child will fare the better for not being thought so much of. I always say that 'the watched pot never boils,' and people are constantly disappointed themselves, besides being intolerable to others, when they make too great a fuss about any thing that belongs to them."

Mrs. Hartland was deeply offended, and thus ended an intercourse which had ceased to please on either side, and the *go-between* quitted Henbury and its inhabitants for ever, enlisting herself from that moment amongst the most active of the oppositionists, who ridiculed their folly and resented their pretensions.

Matters proceeded in this train till our once social pair had scarcely a neighbour with whom they interchanged the usual hospitalities. They were, however, so absorbed by their domestic interests, that no void was felt, and the only serious grief which disturbed their happiness

was the want of a companion about his own age for their idol Algernon, who improved in beauty as he advanced in growth, and gave evidence of talents at five years old which might have been deemed uncommon at double that age.

As may be imagined, Algernon experienced the very worst effects of the spoiling system. Every possible error in education seemed likely to lend its aid in making the child selfish, and the man, if he lived to become one, insignificant and disagreeable. Mrs. Hartland read every treatise which had ever been published on her favourite theme, and endeavoured to put every theory in practice. Like all late converts to any thing from its opposite, she was mad upon the subject of reading. Literature, next to the love of young Algernon, became her ruling passion, and the most tiresome pedantry of language succeeded her natural manner of expressing herself. Exercising a limited capacity on topics new to her understanding, and often above its calibre, our good dame's mind became the strangest mass that could be conceived of ill-digested systems, the principles of which she could not

comprehend, but the practical results of which, however contradictory, she attempted to realize. Algernon was to be a miracle of early knowledge; yet his mind was not to be overwrought. He was to be a prodigy of courage, while every living animal was banished from his presence, lest any injury should reach the child. Of self-denial he was to be a shining example, because Mrs. Hartland found that quality much insisted upon in the works which were now her chief delight; but at the same time her son's spirit was not to be broken by opposition, nor his temper soured by contradiction. From this specimen it is easy to judge of the whole, and the reader has no need of further insight into the chaos which we have sufficiently described.

Mr. Hartland, though Greek and Latin had been driven into his cranium, and he was rather proud of his skill in prosody, was a person of still flatter intellect than his wife. Constitutional indolence also added lead to the dullness of his faculties. It is therefore not to be wondered at, that, mistaking his fair partner's activity for genius, and her dictatorial harangues,

delivered in words, each of which was as long as a tape-worm, for the profoundest wisdom; he honestly believed that Minerva herself had stepped down from her niche in the celestial Pantheon, to assume the outward similitude of his better half.

Now it so happened that, about the period of which we are speaking, a monstrous quarto, with prodigious margins, which professed to impart the newest and most approved method of teaching the young idea how to shoot like a vine along the march of modern intellect, arrived at Henbury-lodge. Mrs. Hartland flew at the prize, and disinterring the volume from the superincumbent mass of brown paper and twine by which it was environed, hastened to her sanctum, and opening at random, after the manner of the Virgilian lots, she chanced to light upon the following paragraph, which struck upon her eye and understanding as especially directed to her peculiar case:

"Nothing is more essential to the healthful "developement of infant mind, than congenial "society. A child should associate with his

"*fellows*, and while the bodily organs are kept
"in wholesome exercise, the mental energies
"are thus directed to the natural objects of
"childish pursuit. To this end children should
"be allowed to consort together, and exhibit
"the true bearings of individual character, un-
"controlled by the bias which is given to youth
"by a constant and injurious companionship
"with adults. In fine, a child should always
"be provided with at least one playmate of his
"own age."

This paragraph rested on the mother's mind, and was the Mordecai of her peace. Her intercourse with the neighbouring gentry was reduced to an occasional exchange of morning visits, which afforded no opportunity of introducing her boy to the children of her acquaintance, and there seemed to be no probability of his having brother or sister with whom to associate at home. In this dilemma Mrs. Hartland often turned in her mind the temporary adoption of a peasant-child, who might serve the desired purpose; but as frequently rejected the idea, through dread of vulgar habits and low

thoughts coming in contact with the mind of her son.

While anxiously ruminating on what was best to be done, it happened that Mr. Ackland, a gentleman who lived a few miles distant from Henbury, called to enquire for the family, and in the course of conversation of that miscellaneous kind which morning visits usually supply, turned to Mrs. Hartland, and asked whether she had been to Hazle-moor?

"Why to that desolate heath?" replied she. "I should not prefer a drive to Hazle-moor for any beauty which that part of the country can boast."

"No," said Mr. Ackland, "the landscape is certainly not very alluring; but you have heard of the lovely little Spaniard. Have you not?"

"I have not the least idea of what you allude to," answered Mrs. Hartland. "What Spaniard do you speak of?"

"Oh!" replied Mr. Ackland, "I thought that every one within a circuit of twenty miles at least had heard of our beautiful infant stranger. It is upwards of a week since a troop

of gipsies appeared upon Hazle-moor, and there they might have held their station ever since without exciting particular attention, were it not for the extraordinary perfections of a child, who has in some mysterious manner fallen into their hands. Two or three portrait-painters have already come to take likenesses of the fascinating little creature; and the wild community to which she belongs having discovered the profit which may be realized through her means, are daily making money by exhibiting the symmetry of her baby-form to all who are prompted by curiosity to visit this tiny enchantress."

"Who is she?" said Mrs. Hartland.

"That is precisely the question which every body asks, and none can answer," replied Mr. Ackland. "If her owners are acquainted with her parentage, they do not choose to tell more than that they purchased her from a soldier's wife, who seemed a worthless sort of person. Her little mantle, hat, and plume, together with her country's dialect, proclaim the land which gave her birth. She speaks fluently, though with lisping tongue, and calls herself Zoé, as the

nearest approximation which she can make to the more difficult pronunciation of Zorilda, which is the name she bears."

"Dear babe!" exclaimed Mrs. Hartland, "what will become of her?"

"Alas!" said Mr. Ackland, "the parents who have been robbed of such a child are objects of one's tenderest commiseration; and as to the little one herself, it is but too easy to foretell that her course cannot prosper. She is now only three years old or thereabouts; and for a short time to come may not imbibe the poison of personal flattery, but a race of vanity will terminate in destruction. Were I not the father of a family, and fearful of introducing perhaps the murderer of future repose amongst my children by bringing a dangerous non-descript under my roof, I would certainly purchase Zorilda from her present possessors, and take her home to Newlands, in the hope of being able to restore her some day or other to her relations. Yet, on the other hand, she may be the property of people who are not desirous to reclaim her, and might entail a weighty re-

sponsbility on my head. Such a romantic importation into my household could not fail of working mischief in the fulness of time, and therefore I have resolved silencing all the *yearnings* of impulse; but I recommend both you and Mr. Hartland to go and see her, as the wandering group who are intent on showing her to all who will pay them for the sight, will speedily pack up in all probability for some other scene."

A sudden thought, which she refrained from promulging, darted across the mind of Mrs. Hartland, and she pondered intently on what had fallen from Mr. Ackland till the following day, when, ordering her carriage immediately after breakfast, she set out, accompanied by her husband, young Algernon, and his nurse, for Hazle-moor.

CHAPTER VI.

"Beauty provoketh Thieves sooner than Gold."

As you like it.

The day was fine, and Algernon in high sprightliness and bloom, while his delighted mother, stimulated by the opportunity of comparison which now presented itself, secretly doubted in the pride of her heart that any "mortal mixture of Earth's mould" could furnish such a specimen of infant grace, as feasted her raptured eyes whenever they rested on her darling, who had now attained the fifth anniversary of his birth. Arrived at the Gipsey encampment, the party from Henbury descended from their carriage and approached a crazy tent, the back of which was turned towards the road by which our visitors had arrived at Hazle-moor. Mrs. Hartland, snatching her boy's hand, pressed eagerly forward, seeking

with all her eyes, in every direction, for the little Zorilda. A group of rustic looking children were at play in front of the tent, and Mrs. Hartland darted into the midst of the circle, but not seeing any thing attractive in the coarse physiognomy of these youthful boors, she was seized with sudden alarm lest the object of her curiosity had been borne away by some fortunate rival, in the very scheme which she was herself meditating at that moment.

While she paused, not perceiving any grown person to whom she could direct an enquiry, a woman came running from a little distance and called out, "the Spanish child is here, Ma'am, please to walk this way." So saying, she conducted the party to the distance of a few hundred yards, till they reached a great mound of peat which had been piled together by the peasants of the country for firing, and formed a main source of incitement to the gipsies in selecting this spot for their temporary encampment.

The woman preceded, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Hartland, Algernon, and his nurse, and as they turned round the corner of the peat-rick,

they were arrested with astonishment at sight of the perfection of human loveliness which burst upon their impatient view. Nothing, which was ever fashioned in the laboratory of Nature in her most plastic mood, could surpass the exquisite beauty of the cherub who lay fast asleep upon a cushion of newly gathered heath, the rich purple blossoms of which, mingling with curls of glossy jet, seemed to breathe their perfumes in token of grateful pleasure, as the mountain breeze playing amongst the tender branches wafted their delicate sprays across the infant's polished brow, as if to guard the little angel from the sun's too fervid beams.

Mr. and Mrs. Hartland gazed in silent rapture, but Algernon's transports were not so easily repressed; and Zorilda was wakened by the inconsiderate demonstration of his joy at sight of her. The pretty creature started from her fragrant pillow, and, frightened by the presence of strangers, opened wide the most splendid dark eyes, which till then had been reposing within their silken curtains, and, looking wildly round, stretched her dimpled arms

towards the gipsey woman, to whose features she was accustomed; but ere the movement was finished, her attention was caught by the little boy, and springing forward to him, these charming children were in an instant locked in each other's embraces.

Mrs. Hartland's tears bespoke the feelings of her heart, and the gipsey woman, desirous to heighten the effect of the scene by flattery, assured her that the little Spaniard had never before exhibited such sensibility to a stranger.

The children played together with a kid which had attached itself to Zorilda, and lay cropping the stray sprigs of her flowery couch while she slept. As Mrs. Hartland retired back a few paces to indulge her emotion, the young Spaniard fancied that she was going away, and seizing her hand, pointed to Algernon with a look of deep anxiety, crying, in the sweetest possible accent, "Lady, no, no go." The spell was now firmly bound around the mother's affection, and she resolved, that if money could purchase the child, she would not return home without Zorilda. Mr. Hartland was in the

habit, as has been stated, of yielding to every suggestion of his wife, whose prudence he respected as much as he admired her wisdom; and as he doted on his son, in common with her, and was as much delighted with Zorilda as Mrs. Hartland could possibly be, he entered warmly into the idea of securing such a treasure of companionship for Algernon, and set about negotiating the purchase with all the zeal of one who wished to succeed.

The husband of the gipsey woman returned ere long, and much time did not elapse before a bargain was concluded, the terms of which were, that the child should accompany the party to Henbury, leaving the best part of her little wardrobe behind, and fifty guineas were to be exchanged for her in cash. The gipsies were in reality very anxious to sell the infant, as, though the avidity of gain rendered them desirous to exhibit her for profit, they suffered continual uneasiness from the dread of her being claimed. They had, it is true, stolen her in a distant part of the kingdom, and reached Hazle-moor by forced marches and by intricate bye ways; but

much farther concealment could not be hoped for, and the mere loss of their booty was not the worst which these lawless plunderers apprehended. They would be punished for the flagrant violation of the laws which they had committed, and therefore gladly availed themselves of the first offer to take the little girl off their hands for a pecuniary price.

The business was arranged, and Zorilda, who clung with the greatest solicitude to her new acquaintance, as if she felt it more natural as well as agreeable to associate with them than her late masters, was put into the carriage. Algernon followed, and Mrs. Hartland was just raising her foot to the step, when Zorilda's kid made a spring, and took precedence most ungallantly of the lady. The children were charmed with nanny-goat's agility, clasped it in their arms, and begged that it might be left with them. Half a guinea settled this second sale, and the happy family drove away; Mr. Hartland having stipulated to redeem his promissory note on the next market-day at the Tholsel, and an engagement having been agreed to by

the wandering horde, that no enquiries should ever be made by any of them again concerning the Spanish foundling.

"Who *can* this little darling be?" said Mrs. Hartland. It was in vain that she catechised the child. "Zoé," was the only reply to the question, however frequently repeated, of "what is your name?"

The little stranger speedily adopted the sounds of "papa and mamma," the happy children lived in each other's smiles, unconscious that a time might ever come when joy should be exchanged for grief; and what is more extraordinary, such is the contraction of a selfish spirit, parents who ought to have been able to take a wider survey of causes and effects, were satisfied with present expediency, and resolved that futurity should shift for itself.

Time rolled on; the same lessons, the same amusements, occupied the opening minds of Algernon and Zorilda; yet in reality how dissimilar was the education which they received! Admired, and even cherished as was the latter, she was in point of fact a purchased slave, while

the former was the hope, the promise, the prop, and pillar of his father's house. As we have never obtained a phrenological survey of these childrens' heads, we shall not say any thing of original configuration with reference to faculties and positions, nor fraudulently entrap our readers into a new edition of Locke on the human understanding, when they expect to find a narrative relating to individuals and events. It suffices us as faithful biographers to state that, while Algernon was theoretically informed, Zorilda was practically instructed; and as early impressions are generally conceived to possess considerable influence on subsequent character, we hope to be pardoned for briefly describing the opposite results of two systems essentially different from each other. Were the children at their meals? Algernon was told that good boys were never greedy, but he was always helped first. Were the little friends at play? Algernon often heard that the eldest, who had most sense, should always give up, and "the young gentleman yield to the young lady." Yet Algernon who was selfish, contended, con-

quered, and was never reprimanded. He was *recommended* to be polite, but the little Zorilda was *commanded* to bring him whatever he wanted. Matters in short were so managed, or rather mismanaged, that *words* were employed with one, and *actions* with the other; *shadows* were the portion of Algernon, while all the *substance* of discipline was bestowed on Zorilda.

As the children advanced they read the same books, they were taught by the same masters, they learned the same accomplishments, but literary or ornamental acquirement is only the surface of education. The foundation of character, such as forms the real distinction between individuals of the human species, must be laid in the heart, and whether a man is the blessing or the curse of that society in which he possesses influence in after life, generally depends upon the practical nature of those views by which his natural propensities are regulated, his vicious tendencies repressed, and every noble, virtuous indication strengthened and encouraged. Profession is not principle; saying is not doing; and the fruits will correspond with the methods

pursued in training the youthful mind. Algernon and Zorilda doted on each other, but the former loved himself better than his little companion. He could not endure her absence, but it was because her sweet temper, cheerful acquiescence and inventive talents, increased the measure of his enjoyment by constant study to please, and perpetual variety in the means of amusement. Zorilda's affection on the contrary was unadulterated by the alloy of selfishness. She could not imagine pleasure separate from the happiness of those who were dear to her little heart. Though her childish sports lost all their charm when Algernon did not share them, she would at any moment endeavour to promote his gratification by the sacrifice of her own; and employed her irresistible eloquence in furthering the indulgence of a ride upon the favourite pony at Mr. Hartland's side, which would deprive her of all she valued till the return of her beloved play-fellow from his excursion.

At length arrived the important hour of decision upon the long agitated question of a public school or a private tutor; and the latter was

agreed upon. Mr. Playfair's credentials were unexceptionable, and he commenced his course with every prospect of mutual liking. He was a middle-aged man, of pleasing manners, and an excellent scholar; but as he was given to understand that no moral instruction was required at his hands, he soon learned to desist from interfering with a department placed beyond the bounds of his jurisdiction.

"I would not allow any mortal," said Mrs. Hartland, "to supersede me in the pleasing task of forming the mind and manners of my son;" and we have already seen how she was qualified for the work which she determined on executing without substitute or auxiliary.

Algernon wept over the Latin Grammar, and chiefly, because he did not see any one else condemned to the labours which were inflicted on him.

"Why does not Mr. Playfair make Zoé as unhappy as I am, and give her this hard lesson to get by heart?" said the boy, as he sobbed upon his mother's breast.

Zoé was also drowned in tears; but it was be-

cause Algernon was afflicted, and her question, urged in the softest tenderest accent, was, "Oh, why may not I learn his lesson? I will then teach it to him."

These two short and simple queries furnish the clue by which to follow the entire labyrinth of these childrens' course. Mr. Playfair, who was charmed with Zorilda's beauty and docility, readily undertook to aid her generous purpose, by becoming her tutor, to which Mrs. Hartland willingly consented; "*not* that Greek and Latin," said she, "are necessary for a young lady, but as dear Zoé, who in point of fact is *nobody*, much as we love her, may turn all that we can do for her to future account, she may now be made useful to Algernon as well as herself, by sharing *all* his labours."

This fiat, though pronounced in an under voice, struck on Zorilda's ear and attention. She was nów only six years old, but the remarkable acuteness of her sensibility, as well as understanding, rendered a thousand appeals to both, which were beyond the reach of much older children, comprehensible to her young

mind; and the word *nobody* suffused her expressive countenance with a blush of deepest die. She had often heard the question asked, "Who is she?" "Zoé," was her only reply, and she had never tarried to hear another answer. This *nobody* perplexed her little heart, and, running into the arms of Mrs. Hartland, she buried her glowing face in the bosom of her protectress.

"What do you mean, dear Mamma? sure Algernon is somebody; and though I am younger, is not Zoé somebody too? we are both *your* children."

Mrs. Hartland sighed, and, caressing the child, disengaged herself from the tender pressure, while a "Yes, my love," hastily uttered as she left the room, had the effect of brushing away the tear which, at Zoé's age, "is dried as soon as shed."

Mr. Playfair was a man of distinguished learning, but he possessed qualities of much rarer character than scholarship. He was a man of strong sense and deep feeling.

Mrs. Hartland on quitting the room had

given him a look of intelligence, which he understood, and following her to another apartment, he listened, for the first time, to the history of Zorilda's introduction at Henbury.

When the story was finished, Mr. Playfair ventured to suggest a hint of future inconvenience from this lovely child's domestication in the family.

"A day will come," added he, "in which the truth *must* be revealed, and I foresee at least the possibility of great misery and embarrassment."

Selfish people seldom take long views even for themselves, but happily for the rest of mankind, are generally so uncompromising and precipitate in endeavouring to compass their ends, as to put others on their defence, and enable them sometimes to counteract, always to anticipate the bearing of an illiberal spirit, intent on its own exclusive gratification.

Mr. Playfair possessed discrimination, and took in at a glance the entire *carte du pays.* Though the little Zorilda was affectionately treated at Henbury, he clearly perceived that

she would be unrelentingly sacrificed to the interests of ambition, and shaken off without any attention to her feelings whenever a period arrived in which it might be deemed prudent to get rid of her; but she was an unfriended orphan, and to snatch her from present positive good in order to avoid future contingent evil, might perhaps have been scarcely justifiable, even though ability to do so had seconded inclination. In Mr. Playfair's case it was impossible. He had no resources, and was a single man. All that his situation permitted, he determined on contributing for the benefit of his interesting charge, and never were exertions more fully repaid. Zorilda's talents were of the first order, and what is not usual, the solidity of her understanding equalled its extraordinary quickness. She learned with surprising facility, and discovered such a thirst for knowledge, that, never satisfied with superficial glimmerings, she loved to probe the depths of every subject which lay open to her pursuit.

Algernon's sloth bore strict proportion to Zorilda's industry, of which he knew how to reap

the profit in a manner most congenial to his taste. Certain of having his exercise written, and his translation parsed by the companion of his studies, before she looked at her own task, he gave himself as little trouble as possible; but, aware that the measure of his idleness must continually depend on that of Zoé's diligence and application, he encouraged in her what he neglected in his own instance, and thus was instrumental in assisting Mr. Playfair's benevolent design of storing the mind of the young unknown against the hour of adversity. Whatever was the subject of instruction, Zorilda's intuitive clearness of perception anticipated the labours of her tutor, and she actually learned faster than he could teach; yet vanity was a stranger to her young heart. Conscious of ignorance, while she sought information, it appeared to her nothing extraordinary that she should understand what the wisdom of others supplied: she transferred all honour to her instructor, and as Mr. Playfair had too sincere an interest in the welfare of his pupil to flatter her, our little heroine passed her early spring of life without guessing that her ta-

lents exceeded the common faculties of her fellow-creatures. Algernon breathed, on the contrary, an atmosphere of continual praise, with which his injudicious mother endeavoured to stimulate his progress. The two children might be compared to plants, the one of which put forth its sickly bloom in the artificial soil of a hot-bed; while the other, fanned by the breezes, and fertilized by the dews of heaven, flourished in full luxuriance of natural strength and beauty; but as the gardener, who digs, prunes, trains, and waters, is the only person interested in the gradual unfolding of those "leafy honours," which it is enough for the casual visitor to see fully developed, we shall now draw a curtain over the scene of budding hopes; or, if we may be allowed to conclude our present Chapter with another simile, we will dive like the wild sea bird into the ocean of time, on the surface of which we have been slowly sailing, and hiding beneath the billows for a season, start up anew after a temporary submersion.

CHAPTER VII.

We were as twinned lambs that did frisk i' the sun
And bleat the one at the other: what we changed
Was innocence for innocence. We knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing. No, nor dreamed
That any did.
WINTER'S TALE.

As we are not shackled by those inconvenient unities which fetter the discursive propensities of the dramatist, binding him to time and place, we have been permitted to take a ramble or a doze as our inclinations prompted, and re-assemble at Henbury, after an interval of some years.

On our return, we are naturally struck with the changes which such a lapse has effected. Many alterations have taken place amongst our old friends in the Hartland family since our last domestication amongst them. On our return we found, it is true, the same dramatis personæ; but the aspect of things was changed. The master of the mansion was the first to appear as we

approached his dwelling; and though men of his temperament are remarkable for wearing well, the perennial smile which used to illumine his features with the dead-light of a peat-coal fire, was darkened by a cloud, if not of contemplation, certainly of care, which had destroyed the only redeeming expression of a mindless countenance. He was riding over his farm, with his eyes fixed on vacancy, while he went at a snail's pace, and his horse's bridle lay floating on the pummel of the saddle. We next discovered that Mrs. Hartland was not far off, as we heard her speak before we had the pleasure of seeing her, and learned, on inquiry, that we were not mistaken in our recollection of her voice, though it was now employed in scolding, which was a novelty to our ears.

"Ay," said the gardener, with whom we held some conversation before we were enabled to judge for ourselves, "Missess has taken latterly to thrift, and her eye is every where. We say that, like what is remarked of the Bristol men, she sleeps with one eye open, for nothing escapes her. She is all for the lucre of gain. The

family is kept as bare as can be, and she sends off the best of every thing to market. Miss Ferret now supplies the whole country round with Henbury pork, and Henbury fowls, and Henbury cheese, vegetables, fruit, and flowers. Nothing will go down that doesn't come from Henbury; and it is lamentable to see a lady scuffling about early and late, in her thick shoes and rug cloak; battling with every body, and grinding people to powder with her tongue; and all this to puff up pride, by heaping up treasure for him who will not have the heart to spend it as he ought. If it wasn't for that angel, Miss Zoé, who keeps the young Squire in check, he would be just as great a skin-flint as his mother."

Accuracy of observation is not to be measured by refinement of phrase; and though this rough sketch was delivered in coarse language, it was a correct delineation. Mr. Hartland's strictness of economy had grown out of circumstances, the chief amongst which was a decline in the health of Lady Marchdale. Should she die, there was danger that Lord Marchdale would marry again, and thus the remotest chance might be cut off

of Algernon's succession to the title and estates of his noble relative. As matters stood, though *hope* fluttered her golden pinion, and sometimes dazzled the mother's eye, *expectation* could not be said to live in her breast, for she knew that Lord Marchdale had levied fines, and could alienate his property if he pleased; but he was fond of his name, and her son bore not only that of the family, but the Earl's Christian name in addition; besides, the relation of godfather was *something*, and the best look-out of all was, that a nobleman so situated might delay making his will; in which case, were he to die intestate, Algernon was next heir after his own father. These were strong points, but not sufficient ground to *rest* upon, and therefore Mrs. Hartland prudently resolved to act as if the hedge-rows of Henbury formed the extremest horizon of her view. Having taken the lead in her son's education for several years, and perhaps believing that he was *quite* faultless, she gradually relaxed the severity of her studies, and, ranging the ponderous volumes over which she had pored during many a day upon the shelf, she devoted

herself to active concerns, and became so expert in buying and selling, farming and feeding, that every year found a new deposit in the hands of Mr. Fairly, the stock-broker.

"My dear," said Mrs. Hartland to her husband, "we must not depend on accidents. Our duty is to lay up for our child. If he comes to the family title and fortune, well and good; no harm is done, and a nest-egg in the funds is never amiss. If, on the other hand, we are disappointed, Algernon may still hold up his head amongst our neighbours, if we scrape together our pence, and live as we ought to do."

Mr. Hartland nodded assent, and the screwing system commenced, not, however, without a keen eye to appearances, which were to be observed so as to maintain a show of gentility suited to prospective contingencies. The warm, broad, laughing fire was exchanged for the sullen brasier or the sulphurous stove; and though Mr. Playfair more than once reminded Mrs. Hartland of the anecdote of Alexander and Diogenes, she contrived to exclude the brightness of the sun, along with the caloric of his

beams, from affording compensation for the deficiency of coals, by blocking up half the windows in the house, to avoid the tax upon daylight. The *form* of two courses certainly graced the table; but in the first, the smoking joint had given way to scraps and messes dished up nobody knew how, or from what material, while never-ending Jerusalem artichokes, skerrets, and celery, played an unfailing part in furnishing the second. We were assured that Mrs. Hartland's parsimony had even descended to mixing the wines with water, before they were put down after dinner.

But where were the young people, and how had time dealt with them? The old lord of the scythe and hour-glass had performed the promise which, during their infancy, he made to each. Algernon, who had reached his nineteenth year, was strikingly handsome. Nearly six feet in height, he had nothing of the awkwardness which usually marks that age; but presented the appearance of full-grown five-and-twenty. Algernon was, however, still the same indolent

and selfish being of our former acquaintance. He had imbibed just enough of knowledge and acquirement to shew how much more he might have attained, and possessed abilities capable of far higher cultivation than he could be prevailed upon to employ; but self was the deity of his worship, and we need say no more of him.

Of Zorilda—what words can be found to convey an adequate idea of her perfections? She had numbered nearly seventeen years, and in face and figure exhibited a model of female loveliness. The exquisite beauty of her form, the natural grace of every movement, and the penetrating sensibility of her countenance, would have rivetted all beholders, even though her features had wanted that symmetry which is requisite to charm the artist's eye; but Zorilda might have defied the painter's skill to find a fault in the proportions of her face, and that face bespoke the soul which dwelt within, and was worthy of such a casket to contain such a gem. Never did imagination create a more delightful fiction than was realized in the person

of the youthful Spaniard. Was it wonderful, then, that all who looked upon her, saw and loved?

For two young people to have lived from infancy together without having ascertained that they were not related to each other by even the remotest tie of consanguinity, would be ridiculous to suppose, and was not the fact, though Mr. and Mrs. Hartland had been silent, and ordered their household to abstain from any communication which might destroy the illusion of brother and sister, which, if established into habitual belief, might never be questioned, and prevent the growth of those sentiments which the anxious parents at *last* dreaded to anticipate. Blinded by her wishes, as well as natural presumption, Mrs. Hartland had long refused to open her eyes to the possible consequences of her imprudent conduct, in domesticating her only son with the most attractive of her sex, unless she desired a union between them. She saw nothing but the accomplishment of her own views in *any* arrangement; and even after the warning voice of Mr. Playfair had put her on

her guard, thought it only necessary to employ an increased reserve upon the topic of Zoé's origin, to secure against an unfortunate result, and continue to Algernon the happiness of companionship, without - endangering his future repose.

"Should a time ever arrive," said the coarse-grained Mrs. Hartland, "when it may become requisite to take stronger measures, it is only necessary to tell Algernon the truth. *My* son will never disgrace himself by alliance with a gipsey. We can remove Zoé at any time, as I say, Mr. Playfair. I appeal to *you*, rather than Mr. Hartland, on this point, because he is absurdly fond of the girl, and I often tell him that I am certain he loves that *enfant trouvé* better than his own flesh and blood."

"If he did not love his ward," replied Mr. Playfair, "he would be less than human. Every body loves her, and when she is called hence amongst her kindred of the skies, the angels will greet her, not as a stranger, but beloved companion, who had been detached from the heavenly ranks for a season, to teach earth

better things than mortals could have learned without her. Madam, you know my opinion; I have often told you that the young people are bound in cords of affection for each other, which it will be a heart-break to dissever. Your son may not suffer much; the world lies before him; he will soon go to the University, and find new friends as well as amusements; but not so the gentle, the tender Zorilda, of whose happiness you seem to make small account. May I ask what are your intentions respecting her? She is already a woman in growth, and her acquirements would do honour to any age; believe me, the danger increases daily, and an indissoluble engagement may bind your son in chains, which having forged yourself, you could not desire him to break; you would not have him act dishonourably, and sully his name for ever in the eyes of virtue and delicacy."

"Nonsense! Mr. Playfair," said Mrs. Hartland, with vehemence, "virtue and delicacy indeed! There would be much of these fine qualities required to make me keep my temper, if I feared the fulfilment of your prediction. I *must* say that, after so many years passed in my

family, I might naturally expect that you would enter a little more into the feelings of a mother, and the interests of our house; but truly, gratitude is a rare return now-a-days for the most valuable friendship. I cannot conceive why you should not see the impossibility of a marriage between Algernon, the stay, the support, I may surely add, the heir apparent, of a noble house, and an orphan out-cast. Who is Zorilda?"

Mr. Playfair's cheek burned with honest indignation, but he determined to control himself, and calmly replied:—

"The period of our separation, Madam, is drawing near, and I do not wish to embitter the last moments of sojournment under your roof by useless inquiries into the measure of my gratitude. For *kindness* I am always acknowledging, but if you allude to my pecuniary obligations, which if I mistake not, take the lead in *your* estimate of favours conferred, I must beg leave to observe that I have dearly earned my salary as tutor to your son, and may perhaps be presumptuous enough to think that,

on casting up the amount of mutual benefit, the balance of debt may lie against you. But we were talking of a worthier theme; you inquire of me, Who is Zorilda? I am sure if you who introduced her here are ignorant of her birth and parentage, it would be difficult for me to have discovered them. I can only say that whoever her parents may be, they are enviable as having given being to such a creature, and pitiable for having lost her. The only particle of rebellion in her whole soul against the wisdom of that Providence to which she bows in all things else with meek submission, may be traced in the anguish which she endures on the score of her mysterious history. Her suspicions have been long confirmed. She knows that she is not your child, and is likewise aware of the obscure destiny from which she was redeemed, through a money price paid by you. 'Alas!' she often exclaims to me, 'what have I done to deserve this cruel punishment? Am I one of those who fall under condemnation for the sins of their forefathers? Why am I a cast-away? Is it like the abundant mercy of a gracious God,

who sendeth rain on the just and the unjust with prodigal bounty, thus to visit a guiltless being so severely? Death would be preferable to this brand of disgrace. It is like the mark set upon Cain, and shame overwhelms me when I think of my lot. Yes, dear Mr. Playfair, there is a worm which dieth not, gnawing incessantly at my heart's core.'

"In this way, Madam, does Zorilda pour out her grief to me. You know nothing of it, for she thinks it her duty not to broach a subject which you have never touched upon with her. She is wretched as she is lovely and virtuous! Spare her, I conjure you, and let not her feelings be wounded; you may have to answer for her life. When I leave Henbury, I may be able to devise some scheme for the future. I have a sister who lives in Switzerland, and I will—"

Just as Mr. Playfair uttered these words, the door opened, and Zorilda entered the room, radiant with bloom, such as the breath of morn dapples on the velvet cheek of youth. Her long dark eye-lashes were moistened by a tear, and

looked like the silky grass which waves on the streamlet's verge before the sun has smiled away the dew-drop which glitters through its graceful fringes, while with light and gentle step she pressed forward to Mrs. Hartland, holding in her hand a bunch of half-blown roses.

"Here is my first offering from the little tree which Algernon brought me last year, from Marchdale Court; I have kept it secret to surprise dear Mamma."

It was an unlucky moment, and the association of ideas produced by the few words which Zorilda had spoken, was at that instant peculiarly unfortunate. Mrs. Hartland forced a reluctant smile, accompanying a frigid "Thank you," which chilled Zoé to the heart.

"What is the matter, dearest Mamma? are you ill? or has any thing happened to displease you?"

"Do not tease me, Zoé; I was speaking on business of importance with Mr. Playfair; and, my dear, you are growing too old to say *Mamma.* I wish that you would begin to call me Mrs. Hartland."

Zorilda had an intuitive delicacy of character which gave her sufficient command over her feelings to prevent a *scene.* Mrs. Hartland was too unlike her in almost every respect to have ever been the friend of her choice; but she was the only one who had occupied the place of Mother to her, and her whole soul was formed to gratitude and affection; but she had now for the first time experienced repulse, and minds of sensibility do not require to be told what misery may be inflicted on a confiding spirit, by the rejection of its tender sympathies. Zorilda was stung to the quick, but restraining every expression of excitement, she glided hastily from the apartment, carrying with her the unwelcome flowers, which she perceived afforded no gratification.

Without stopping to be informed whether Algernon had returned from his ride, Zorilda flew to an arbour of acacias at some distance from the house, and throwing herself upon a rustic seat, beneath its shade, gave vent to a full tide of sorrow. When the oppression of her bosom was in some measure relieved, she knelt

down, and clasping her hands with uplifted energy of supplication, prayed for fortitude to bear the ills which seemed impending. The Divine aid is never asked in vain, and Zorilda rose strengthened by the fervency of her petition. Her soul was soothed and tranquillized, and she thanked the Almighty for a friend who had in some degree prepared her for events which she now perceived in prospect.

"Yes! Mr. Playfair has sometimes almost appeared unkind, in dwelling on my misfortunes, and prophecying this evil hour, when I should no longer be loved by the protectors of my youth. How *should* they love a purchased stranger? The sad truth is now revealed. While yet children, our infant sports caused no uneasiness, and we enjoyed happiness unmixed with care. We are children no longer, and I am not wanted here. The unknown Zorilda, the wandering gipsey, the dependent orphan, is not considered meet companion for Algernon, advanced to manhood. What shall I do? I must quit the asylum of my youth, the loved partner of my playful hours, the venerable

instructor of my early days, and remove this weight of anxiety from the breast of my benefactress."

"Never!" exclaimed Algernon, who, rushing impetuously into the arbour, caught Zorilda in his arms. "What means this emotion? Zoé, you must be my wife, and then you shall stay here as in your natural home. In the mean time leave it all to me. You know my influence with my mother; I will come to the bottom of these whims, and you shall hear no more of them."

"Speak not disrespectfully of your mother, Algernon; she is right, we should either of us perhaps pursue the same course were we in her situation. She once said that I was "nobody." All ask "Who is she? to which painful question there is no answer to be given; and why should I delude myself any more. I thought the world was kind because every one caressed me, but when they did so I was a mere plaything. Those who once cherished are now ashamed of me, and this is what I can never bear. Mr. Playfair has taught me many things, and your mother

(oh! must I never again call her mine) has not neglected to make me useful. I will earn my bread, and be a willing sacrifice if my departure can restore the peace which I have disturbed."

Algernon, though spoiled by indulgence, and rendered vain by flattery, was as yet uncorrupted by the cold maxims of worldly wisdom, and loved Zorilda with all the devotion of which a narrow soul was capable. She was the confidant of all his pains and pleasures. In her society the former were always mitigated, the latter constantly enhanced. He had gazed upon her beautiful countenance, which reflected every ray that cheered or cloud that darkened his own from infancy to youth; and he could not realize to his mind the possibility of a separation from a being so habitually necessary to his comfort.

"I will threaten my mother to shoot myself if she plagues you any more," vociferated Algernon; and before the gentle Zoé could reply, he darted from the arbour and ran to seek his agitated parent; while Zorilda bent her steps towards a walk where she thought it likely that

she should meet Mr. Playfair, in which hope she was not disappointed. A conversation with him was always sure to give her comfort; and never had she so much needed the balm of kindness as on the present occasion. Zorilda wept with bitterness as she expressed her grief and surprize at the altered tone of Mrs. Hartland, and an impatient desire to sacrifice every consideration to that of removing a source of disquietude from her breast.

"Softly, my dear child," said Mr. Playfair, as he kindly pressed the hand of his pupil. "We must not allow ourselves to act on mere impulses, however amiable. There are *picturesque* sorrows which must not be allowed to tempt us out of the broad high way of a sober march. We must not talk of victims and sacrifices, altars and shrines. Though I know your heart, and how sincere are your wishes to promote the happiness of others, even to the forgetfulness of your own, I cannot permit you to be romantic. There is a vanity in heroic deeds which dims the purity of action. My dear Zoé will act, I trust, in all things with a

single purpose, and that purpose is to endeavour at the performance of *duty*, the most difficult part of which, in morals as in the field of war, is to *forbear*. Your path is sown with thorns, but I have often warned you against repining. Believe and trust, pray to Him who alone appoints the issue of events, for patience to *submit*. You cannot see why you are thus grieved—you do not understand why you are a nameless, solitary, insulated being, unknown, unclaimed, unconnected; while all whom you see around are encircled in the social bands of fond relationship. You do not behold the *end*. A day may come in which you shall be suffered to comprehend the mysteries which now obscure your sight; or, should it not please God to send a lamp to your feet, you may learn to bless the darkness by which you are enveloped, and rejoice in that uncertainty which you now consider your greatest misfortune. You must not leave Henbury. Mrs. Hartland is bound to protect you, and will do so. You will correspond with me, and I will watch your interests with an anxious eye."

The ingenuous Zorilda confessed that some pride and impetuosity were perhaps mingled with better feelings, in her hasty resolution to quit the friends of her youth; and promising implicit acquiescence in her Mentor's advice, prepared to return to the house. In her way thither she met Algernon, who hastened to inform her that he had settled every thing with his mother. "I told her fairly that I would never marry any one but you; and that unless she chose to quarrel with me, she must behave as she used to do in former times towards you. You know that I can do any thing with my mother, and therefore you need not fret yourself any more. Do dry your eyes, for I hate to see you in this deplorable state. Come and feed the pheasants, I have not been to visit them to day."

The disinterestedness of a noble mind attributes its own qualities to every other, and Zorilda could perceive no motive in Algernon's conduct at any time which would not have actuated her own in a similar situation. She thanked him affectionately, but, gently rebuking

him for not speaking more kindly of his mother, added,

"You vex her I am sure by talking of marrying. You and I are very young; we cannot see into futurity. I do not like engagements that bind one to do what perhaps the free heart might reject at an after-time. You are going away, and will find new pleasures in the world, and of which you never dreamed before. You will not, it may be, always think of poor Zoé as you do now, and I could not be satisfied with the cold performance of a vow. I shall never love any beside Algernon, but *you* must be free."

Zorilda's tears gushed afresh as she uttered these words; to which her youthful lover impatiently replied,

"You know, Zoé, that I have no *taste* for this *larmoyante* mood; I love the laughing philosophers; they are the only true ones after all. Tottham, our bailiff, told me lately that my godfather cannot live long. When he dies my father succeeds to a certainty. Then I shall be Lord Hautonville, with the higher title of Marchdale in prospect; and may do what I please.

Now I please to marry you, and let me hear what is to prevent me from following my inclination."

Zoé sighed. " Dear Algernon, I do not love to build a life of happiness upon the death of friends. I love you as you are, and do not like the titles in your family half so well as your own pretty name. Besides, I am sure from what Mr. Playfair says of the world, that I should never enjoy its gay pageants. I would rather feed our gold and silver pheasants than see myself decorated with all the jewels which you often tell me shall one day be mine."

" You will not always think so," replied Algernon; " and I should be sorry if you did. Nothing, it is said, is more annoying to a man of fashion than a rustic wife who does not know her situation."

" Alas!" said the artless Zoé, " I do not like the only specimen of high life that I have seen amongst young men, and ever since you and the Marquess of Turnstock have taken so many rides together, you have picked up several new notions unlike your former self. I wish that his

Lordship would go away, and leave our sober country."

"That he will not do till the shooting season is over," answered Algernon; "and I can tell you, that our acquaintance is only in the bud. He is an Oxford man, and I expect that we shall be much together. Here comes my mother. She has made me promise not to call you my wife, nor talk any more of our marriage in her presence. So upon the principle of 'any thing for a quiet life,' I shall indulge her during my short remaining stay, and she will be all civility and good-humour with you. Are you not much obliged to me?"

Zorilda sighed again. Mrs. Hartland came up; took her son's arm; discovered that some overhanging branches required lopping, and sent Zorilda off with affected unconstraint to call the gardener, and see the job executed.

Mrs. Hartland now felt that her innocent ward was a grievous encumbrance, but she rejoiced to see her son attach himself *con amore* to the society of the young nobleman of whom we have made mention, and who had lately come

to pay a visit in the neighbourhood of Henbury.

"Mr. Playfair is right," said she to herself, as she soliloquized on this subject, which now absorbed all her thoughts: "I ought not to take this thing to heart. Opposition only rivets faster whatever we resist in a young mind, and matters which are often spoiled by our interference, would rectify themselves if we let them alone. Algernon will be cured of his *first love* by the sight of newer faces, and I am resolved to give a hint to Lord Turnstock, to serve as a cue hereafter, for ridiculing low matches, in the presence of my dear boy, who will grow wise in time. Poor Zoé is useful to me, and I should certainly lose a great deal by giving her up, besides appearing cruel and capricious. No, no; all will come about in the end, and a little flirtation in early life never leaves lasting impression, now that the days of romance have vanished. My sister Gordon too, is a valuable *corps de reserve*. She will come to visit me ere long, and will dote on Zorilda, who is just formed in

the very mould for her. I *will not* torment myself: 'All's well that ends well.'"

With the help of these reflections Mrs. Hartland allayed the ferment of her temper, and went to give orders that due preparation should be made for the Marquess, who was invited to dine at Henbury, by way of securing his future friendship for the Oxonian elect. How comically do people in middling life deceive themselves respecting the nature of an occasional intercourse with the great! A hum-drum pair, in a remote situation, ransack the entire district to get up a dull dinner at enormous cost, and the noble stranger, for whom this unusual expense is incurred, does penance for a banquet which is supposed to be as fine a thing in his eyes as in those of his unpractised entertainers, and to create a sense of obligation never to be forgotten. The Marquess of Turnstock was precisely one of those young men of fashion who consider their presence ample requital for a lavish expenditure of the best viands, and the choicest wines; and as the country afforded little variety, an invitation from the Hartlands arrived

seasonably enough in aid of killing a day. A cook was sent for to the county town; and fish, flesh, and fowls, in accredited rotation, were provided from all quarters. The Marquess brought three or four gentlemen, who were, he said, "brother sportsmen," along with him; and Mrs. Hartland expressed herself as particularly gratified with this indication of his desire to cultivate an intimacy with her son. "It was such an easy friendly act, and shewed how completely his Lordship felt *at home*," that she augured every thing from such a beginning.

Zorilda entreated leave to absent herself from the dinner table, to which Mrs. Hartland at first objected, from a secret hope that some one of the strangers might be captivated by her beauty, but was prevailed upon to acquiesce, from an irresistible argument, that the eye of her protegée might be advantageously employed behind the scenes, in marshalling the servants, and regulating affairs in a house unaccustomed, generally speaking, to any other than a plain family dinner.

Few motives are altogether unmixed. Zorilda's private incentive on the present occasion

was to evade the awkwardness, which till of late had never been practically distressing to her feelings, of having *no name*. "The little gipsey," "The Spanish girl," passed lightly over her ear at an early period, but now planted a dagger in her heart; and she courted solitude, flying from the presence of even a casual guest. Mrs. Hartland, however, would not dispense with Zoé's company at the tea-table, at which she was obliged to preside; but as the gentlemen were not aware that any metal more attractive than the society of Mrs. Hartland awaited them in the drawing-room, they were slow in making their appearance; and when they did leave the dining-parlour, some of the party were certainly not the best society themselves. Elate with wine, they talked and laughed on their way up stairs, in full demonstration of having sacrificed too devoutly at the shrine of the rosy god; but when the drawing-room door was opened, and Zorilda, glowing with modest loveliness, met their astonished view, their boisterous mirth received a sudden check, and they all seemed to feel simultaneously, "how awful beauty is."

The Marquess and his satellite wassail rs, were struck with amazement at sight of the vision which now presented itself to their eyes, and appeared instinctively to avoid the tea-table at which she sat. A sort of general introduction took place, in which no name, except that of the Marquess, was distinctly heard; while Mr. Playfair, who had protracted his sitting below stairs, in order to act, as far as hospitality would permit, as a *buff-stop* on the festive gaiety of his pupil, took his station on one side of Zorilda, and Mr. Hartland took possession of a chair on the other. Well pleased to find herself thus guarded, the timid Zoé smiled sweetly on her supporters, and proceeded to perform the mysteries of tea and coffee as priestess of the rites.

The reader is not to understand that our guests were inebriated. That expression conveys too strong a meaning. "Flushed with the Tuscan grape," they were still *compos*, and after a short pause the *rumble* of conversation, like that of a mill-wheel, was heard again to succeed a temporary suspension.

"My friend Forbes, Mrs. Hartland," said Lord Turnstock, "is an Irishman, and we have been bantering him on his country. I was just making these gentlemen laugh with the story of an old woman who came to me some time ago requesting my interference to prevent her grandson, who had enlisted, from being sent to the Island of Saints with his regiment. 'Oh my Lord,' said she, 'I shall never see my poor boy again. They says as how that the Romans are all romancing so furious in Hireland.' Was'nt it excellent?"

Mrs. Hartland laughed heartily, and Mr. Forbes, a very handsome fine young man, stepped forward, still addressing her as *Chairman* of the Committee in defence of his native Erin:

"I can allow them to amuse themselves, Mrs. Hartland," said the young Hibernian. "I grant that amongst vulgar people the peculiar tone of my country, which you may have heard called *brogue*, is not harmonious, but I would fight it against your Somersetshire, Lancashire, or Cornish dialects, any day in the year; and as for Irish *character*, it stands too high to need my

championship. Whether I turn my eyes to the cabinet or the field, whether I contemplate scholarship or divinity, powers of penmanship or conversation, I find myself standing on such exalted ground that I can endure the merriment of his Lordship with the calm dignity of a lion, round whose head the harmless fly is humming. He shall divert himself as much as he likes with the Anglo-Irish, provided he sets his hand and seal to the truth of my statement."

"You are too strong to need his Lordship's vote," said Mr. Playfair; "you have no occasion to solicit, you may command assent; at least this is not the age for triumph over you. Whichever way we turn Irishmen meet our eyes in the first situations of the state; and as to the fair daughters of your Emerald Isle——"

"In *this* company I withdraw *their* claim," answered Mr. Forbes; "at least I am forced to be modest in asserting it."

Zorilda coloured violently; and the Marquess, apparently apprehensive of not being considered *first* actor in the scene, looked at his watch, and ringing the bell, ordered his carriage, which

was in fact already at the door; then apologizing for the lateness of the hour to which he had been detained by agreeable society, a general leave taking succeeded, and the guests departed without having exchanged three words with her who had excited all their curiosity.

"Who is that magnificent girl, Hartland?" said the Marquess, as he reached the hall door, and got rid of the civilities of his elder host, who stuck closely to his side all the way down stairs.

"Where was she during dinner-time?" inquired Mr. Forbes.

"Why did you not apprize us of this rural divinity?" asked young Cecil; "I should gladly have paid her an earlier homage."

As these questions were put all in a breath, Algernon contrived to evade them; and in the bustle of calling for hats, gloves, &c. they were never answered. "She can hardly be a sister of Hartland's, she is so unlike the family," said Lord Turnstock. "I wonder you none of you asked her name." "One would imagine that she has not any name," replied one of his companions; "probably the truth is, that this coun-

try *belle* is affianced to the *heir apparent* of Henbury, and the youth is an Othello. I saw him frown like Jupiter while we gazed at his beloved; and I am sure that the fellow will dream to-night of rope-ladders, post chaises and four, elopements, and the blacksmith of Gretna Green."

The Marquess laughed, and fell asleep. Some of his associates followed his example, and thought no more of Zorilda till they reached Thornton Abbey; but Cecil and Forbes were not of the number.

"Did you hear the servants say who that young lady is whom I saw Mr. Hartland's?" said his Lordship to his valet when he retired to his bed-chamber.

"No, my Lord, I took no notice, except that I recollect somebody said that a Virginia nightingale, which I saw in a cage, belonged to Miss Zoé, or some such name; perhaps she may be the young lady that your Lordship means."

"Aye i'faith, she is worthy of a Grecian appellation," muttered the Marquess, as his servant went out of the room. "This fair in-

cognita is certainly an exotic, and the banks of the Ilissus may have given her birth. She would make a noise in London, there is no doubt of that." With this sentence the young Nobleman concluded his meditations; and having desired to be called betimes to go upon a shooting expedition, composed himself to repose. The morning brought its own pursuits, and Zorilda was either effaced from memory, or so little was elicited respecting her that inquiry ceased, and the party at Thornton Abbey dispersed in all directions.

The present age is one of too much refinement for trouble of any kind: and we have long been spared the slavish toil of thinking for ourselves. We talk indeed of *free*-thinkers, and make an unusual stir about liberty of opinion; but that is a *façon de parler* which satisfies, while in reality we are more completely led than at any former period of the world. "Whatever facilitates weakens." The human mind is strengthened by labour; and now that we have grown too polished to work, we cannot look for strong judgment; consequently individuality is

not the character of our time, and we are accustomed to praise or abuse *en masse.* Zorilda with a *title* would have set the capital on fire, and filled every eye and tongue; but Zorilda, untrumpeted, unknown, was soon forgotten. *Name* is everything; whether of player or preacher, beauty or book, a fashionable paper or review sounds the key note, and the chorus is universal.

Preparations were now advancing at Henbury for Algernon's departure to Oxford; and the desolation of Zoé's heart may be more easily imagined than described. To lose the beloved companion of her life, her more than self, seemed wretchedness enough for mortal lot; but in parting with Mr. Playfair too, she was deprived of the only solace which might have remained in her affliction, namely, that of talking over the subject of it with a true friend. Mr. Hartland was good-natured, and had always been affectionate in his bearing; but there was "no speculation in his eye," no intelligence in his mind. He was a mere recipient, and too dull even to reflect with vividness the thoughts

of another. With Mrs. Hartland, Zorilda had ceased to communicate, except on household affairs.

Young and shrinking sensibility, like the opening rose, will only diffuse its fragrance while we refrain from rudely touching its delicate fabric; once decompose the tender structure by unhallowed finger, and no skill of chemic art can restore its organization.

The dread hour arrived, and Zorilda, convulsed with grief, saw the gate close upon all that she best loved on earth.

CHAPTER VIII.

———— "I'm sorry
That he approves the common liar, Fame,
Who speaks him thus at Rome." SHAKSPEARE.

How wisely, how mercifully is the future hidden from our view! Who could bear to look into the book of fate, and see the blighted hopes, the unfulfilled expectations, which await all human dreamers? But though ever ready with sufficient vain glory to refer each prosperous issue to our own prudence and sagacity, we cautiously avoid to charge ourselves with the least co-operation in unfortunate results. Success constitutes the hero, and it is with the triumphant only that we desire to identify ourselves.

Algernon was now sent forth to make his *debut* in society, and we shall see how strictly

his progress coincides with the previous training of his mind.

He loved Zorilda with as much fervour as his nature would permit, and therefore his tears flowed in copious stream as he bid her farewell. Poor Mrs. Hartland ascribed the grief of her son to his separation from her maternal arms. She loved him with entireness of senseless devotion, and fondly flattered herself that she was in return the principal object of his affections. "Dear boy, he will in vain look round for his indulgent mother," sobbed the afflicted parent; but even the love of Zorilda, which was by far the most powerful impression on Algernon's heart, did not long exclude the joy which gained upon his short-lived sorrow with every mile of increasing distance from Henbury. He was going to be his own master in a wider sense than he had ever experienced. He might do *as he pleased.* Mr. Playfair's vigilant eye would no longer watch every movement, and he should meet again with the associates whose short sojournment in the neighbourhood of his father's house had given him

so much pleasure, besides forming many other similar acquaintances. It was not Algernon's design from the first to distinguish himself in any kind of scholarship. The assiduity of his tutor had done something, but even the best talents will not achieve learning unaccompanied by application. Young Hartland intended to render his college course as little irksome as possible, and possessed the means of realizing his views. There is no description of person, generally speaking, so well supplied with money as an only son of a private family, in whom, as the sole object of pride and solicitude, all parental effort is concentrated.

While the young nobleman issues forth depending on his title, and frequently on that alone for consideration; the child, it may be, of a half ruined house, hemmed in on every side by mortgages and bonds, and relying on Jewish facilities of accommodation for keeping up the present ball, to the destruction of future competency; the *son and heir* of *middle* life sets out with purse well lined. He has no "lordship" with which to gild poverty, but must pay his

way, and transfer to his pocket the popularity which he is not provided with any other secret for securing to his person. Algernon was plentifully supplied, and as soon as he found himself unrestrained by the expostulations of Mr. Playfair, he began to spend so lavishly that his rooms were soon the favourite lounge, and he found his acquaintance universally courted. His vanity was flattered, and he never suspected the reality of the case, but gave into the delusive belief that he was sought after for his agreeable qualifications. He wrote letters to his mother which delighted her. They spoke of viscounts, earls, and marquesses, as the familiar companions of his hours; and generally concluded with reminding her that such excellent society as it was his good fortune to have got into, had only one counteracting evil attending on its pleasures, which was expense.

"How considerate is our dear fellow!" said Mrs. Hartland; "but he must not be fettered by too rigid an economy in the opening scene. Frugality, if necessary, may come hereafter; but first impressions are of the highest importance,

and the most useful connections are often made in school and college days. A private education has hitherto deprived my son of this advantage, and it is therefore doubly requisite to stretch a point at present, and supply him liberally. I have foreseen all this, and laid by a little *preserve.* We may pinch at home, and ought to do so, that we may not be said to burn our candle at both ends; but our boy must be enabled to hold up his head amongst the best of them."

Mr. Hartland groaned assent, and the amiable Zoé rejoiced in an opportunity of contributing her mite to Algernon's comfort at Oxford, by courting all sorts of privation at Henbury during his absence.

It is not surprising that an *outfit* regulated by these principles, inspired a belief of riches, and obtained for the freshman such a reputation for affluence that he was surrounded at once as a honey-pot is by flies; while credulity supports the illusion from one generation to another, that a titled herd collected by such means, are to be the props of after life, compensating by

future patronage for the loss of independence incurred in the pursuit of their friendship. The bubble bursts, the gull is undeceived, but as experience seldom rectifies the confidence of hope, a few exceptions are always sufficient to make men reject the general rule, and expect to find themselves added to the "glorious minority" of fortune's favoured exceptions. Alas! the prizes are few, and the blanks are many in the lottery of life, and those are the wisest who speculate the least on lucky *chances.*

Algernon was quickly initiated, and became the soul and centre of every scheme which had pleasure for its aim and object. He gave the best champagne, pulled the best oar, rode the best horse, was always ready to take up a bet, or accept a boxing challenge, and wasted twice as much money as any one else thought of expending, in whatever was the amusement of the day; seeming to render compensation to himself for the long fast which he had undergone, by devouring pleasure not only with a knife and fork, but a spoon to boot. He wrote frequently

to Zorilda, and received letters from her in return.

Mrs. Hartland fretted at the correspondence, but had encouraged her son in the habit of assuming authority to such a degree, that she feared to resist his will; and was obliged to tolerate what she had lost all power to control.

Algernon's letters were at first filled with wishes and laments; the pain of parting; the joy of re-union; interspersed with animated accounts of new scenes and associates. After a time he became less punctual, and proposed that Zoé should not balance too strictly the debtor and creditor sides of their correspondence, but write without waiting for replies, alleging occupation at his studies as a cause for the request. Whatever Algernon suggested was right in Zoé's opinion, and as she was only called on to renounce a self-indulgence, though the greatest which she could enjoy while separated from her friend, she acquiesced without a murmur, though not without a sigh.

A longer silence than usual occurred, and

Zoé could not sleep from agitation, fearing that indisposition might occasion the delay. At last the often-wished-for packet arrived; but though well filled, and giving details of what Algernon called "pleasant parties," it was the least satisfactory which Zorilda had ever received. She read it over and over, yet was less pleased at each re-perusal. We shall give our readers an opportunity of trying how far they sympathize with poor Zoé's feelings, by transcribing this letter as a specimen of our young Oxonian's improvement since he quitted home:

"Dearest Zoé,

"I am guilty of a long pause, and you are very angry; but you little know how my time is taken up. We have had several rowing matches, and I have been taking lessons from some of the *fancy*. Every day confirms the disagreeable conviction that I am half a century behind my contemporaries. What a cursed folly it is not to send boys to a public school! If I had been despatched to Eton instead of having been tied to my mother's apron-string all my days, I should not have every thing to

learn, as is my case at present. However, they say I am an apt scholar, and I do not despair of being soon up with the best of them here.

"The little Marquess did not return till ten days ago. He received me quite like a brother, and we are a great deal together. He says he should not know me again, I have lost so much of the '*country bumpkin*' already. By the bye, we had a very pleasant party at his rooms the other night, but you cannot imagine how foolish I was made to look, about you.

"I wish to heaven you had a name, for it is quite confounding to be asked at every turn, 'Who is she?' without being able to get rid of farther inquiry, by such a simple answer as can be given of every body except yourself from the royal family down to one's washerwoman. If I knew the name of the gipsey from whom my good papa and mamma ran away with you, I would call you after her; but I assure you that rather than encounter another such attack as I have endured in your service, I shall christen you, so prepare for being called Miss Hazle-moor, or Moor, if you like the monosyllable

better, on the principle of the old song which Rachael sings, with a line in it something like this following:

"For the least said, the sooner amended;"

and amended it will all be one of these days, when I marry you. It will little signify when you are my wife—*perchance* a titled one—what name you were known by before. Do not be cast down, my pretty Zo. I have promised, you know, to raise you from your present obscurity, and I can tell you, it is no small proof of my love, that I do not mean to forget my engagement; but I must tell you how they fell upon me the other night.

"Turnstock gave champagne, and some five or six assembled by appointment at his rooms. We were going on very gaily, when my evil genius put it into the Marquess's head to turn shortly round, and say to me, 'Hartland, who the devil is that fair enchantress whom your mother has got *cooped* up at Henbury; not your *sister*, I presume, eh?'

"Unprepared for the question, I was completely at a nonplus, and losing all presence of

mind, I hummed, and hawed, and stammered out—Zorilda.

"'A fine romantic appellation truly,' said his Lordship; 'Donna Zorilda! but to what noble house does she belong?'

"'I cannot tell,' answered I. 'To tell you the truth, a mystery hangs over her birth which I am not permitted to unravel.'

"'Oh! I cry you mercy,' replied the Marquess; 'I shall not make further inquisition; I see how it is, 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet;' so says the poet. A little mystery, they say is never *amiss*. Now it *is a Miss*, and nobody knows *who*, upon the present occasion; but n'importe; Zorilda is a lovely girl; and Zoé, as your servants call her, is better still, associated, as are those three letters, with all the nectar and ambrosia of Grecian song. We will place the Amaranth wreath on Zoé's brow, and drink to her health in a bumper of champagne. Come, Hartland, fill your glass. You shall not undergo any farther catechism. You are too wise a man to marry an 'inexpressive she;' and as for a little of the

doubtful in any other relation of life, there is no need of taking it to heart.'

"Now I know that all this sort of thing will fret and vex you, but never mind, we will talk of other matters. Turnstock is uncommonly clever, and I can assure you that we have often very deep conversation. He brought a young man with him from town who received his education here, but as he wants money and has plenty of brains, he has taken to writing for the Reviews. The little Marquess talks of getting up a periodical here under his own inspection. It is to be called 'The Freeman;' so if you see it advertised you will know whence it springs. We had a sort of *rehearsal* last night, when some contributions were brought in. A friend of mine had a hit against his Lordship which made me laugh. The former brought an Essay on the Paradise Lost, which was read, but the Marquiss condemned it. 'No, Caulfield, that will not do,' said he. 'I do not patronize your sentiments on Milton. You must try your pen at something else.'

"'I thought, my Lord,' answered Caulfield,

'that we were to write for the *Freeman*, but I find that it is for the *Bondsman*.'

"'Free or Bond, I shall not insert your Essay, my good fellow,' answered his Lordship. 'I mean to have this my own way. I set my face against all prosing; not a word of any poet older than Byron of immortal fame; and I will give a prize of his works, bound in russia, to whoever brings me the best satire on our modern novels, which are growing so decidedly moral, metaphysical, and soporific, that I would as lief sit down to Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity as open a volume of any of the last half dozen which have issued from the press. I think I shall write a novel myself, and call it 'Re-action; or, the Extinguisher.'

"You would not like any of my friends I am afraid, who are certainly not *religious* men. The Marquess cavils at holy writ: I was going to stand up its advocate, but found it better to hold my tongue. There are many good people here, but Turnstock calls them *Spoonies*, and I do not feel any ambition to be ridiculed as one of the fraternity. Remember that I am only

talking of my own set; so my father need not take alarm, and accuse me of a libel on his favourite Oxford. Things, however, are changed every where since his day. The Marquess declares that religion is only a political consideration now with strong heads. The march of mind, he says, has outstripped superstition and all her train. I do not say that he is right, for I am not much versed as yet in matters of this nature. The miserable error of bringing me up at home has prevented me, amongst many other things, from knowing what general opinion really is. In fact, Turnstock, who gives me more insight into these subjects than any one else, and who ought to be good authority, is eloquent in decrying all narrow limitations of sect or nation. He says that all mankind should be considered as a great family, claiming equal rights, and entitled to equal privileges; that all qualifications which exclude any individual from the attainment of power are infractions of natural justice; and all religious establishments are the offspring of persecution. He speaks beautifully, and uses very convincing arguments.

For instance, he says, that to be born and to die are common to the whole created species, and no favour or partiality distinguishes one man from another in these two extreme events. The same pangs usher every mortal into existence—helpless, naked, and like his fellows in all things. Death again sweeps away irrespectively the beggar and the king, who both lie down in the grave where all their thoughts perish, and both are resolved alike into dust. 'What right then,' reasons Turnstock, 'has man to play such antic tricks before high heaven, and parcel out the intermediate term so unequally in his generation, that some shall lord it triumphantly, while others starve? Some rule with tyrannous sway, while thousands cringe in chains, and are forced to obey the few who usurp dominion over them?' I wish that you could hear him declaim upon these topics. Caulfield, who is always ready with some vexatious question or remark, but who had listened, as I thought, with as much satisfaction as I did myself to the whole harangue yesterday evening, asked rudely enough at its close, 'And pray, good my Lord, why are you

the Marquess of Turnstock? Your guardians went through a tedious litigation to procure the title for you which another claimed, and fiercely contested. Though not called, like Cincinnatus, exactly from the plough, your Lordship's situation now is very different from what it was. Yet you do not object to these inequalities in your own case!'

"Turnstock looked contemptuously round, and silenced the inquirer in a summary manner, 'Pooh, pooh, Caulfield. You are like a fly, for ever buzzing in one's ears. It is a pity you do not enter at Cambridge, *ad eundem*; you are a *Wrangler* without the trouble of learning, and all competitors will make way for you.'

"There was a great laugh against Caulfield, and so ended the dispute. I have enlisted under Turnstock's banner. I like his Epicurean philosophy, and think that his doctrines would tend to render mankind a far happier race than they are. Remember what I told you about writing with lemon-juice, and be sure to hold all my letters to the fire after you have read them through. Like Janus we must wear two faces.

you know, while we are watched. A day will come when we may defy all vigilance, and interchange our thoughts in ink of any colour. Farewell, my Zoé, how I long to see you!" &c.

Zorilda vainly attempted to counteract the influences which she found increasing reason to perceive were exercised over Algernon's mind to the injury of his character. Her young heart poured forth its entreating eloquence, but the poison had begun to work, and she had not sufficient power to arrest its deadly progress. In vain did she appeal to the memory of happier days in strains like the following, which we extract from one of her letters:

"Oh, my Algernon! is it for this that I have submitted to the mean device of dissimulation, and joined in a plot to deceive your mother by writing that which she is not to see? When I complied with your proposal to adopt this mode of frustrating her penetration, it was that I might spare her pain, and exert the power which I fondly imagined I possessed over your mind to your advantage, by constantly remind-

ing you of the lessons which our dear and valued preceptor left us as a parting legacy. Algernon, I am punished for forgetting that we must not do evil in hope of future good. Yet after once o'erstepping the barrier which separates truth from falshood, the noble ingenuousness of virtue for the mean accommodations of artifice, how difficult to regain the track of probity and honour! I feel with bitterness, how greatly I have erred; yet before I for ever abjure this dishonest method of conveying to you my secret thoughts, I will for once express the anguish of my heart, as I trace in your altered language a different Algernon from him who was the brother of my infant years, the beloved friend of riper age. Have *you*, too, become ashamed of the nameless Zorilda? and do *you* ask 'Who is she?' with scornful reproach? Then indeed is my cup of affliction filled to overflowing. Talk no more of a day to come, when raised to the dignity of your wife. That question, which has been the blight of my Spring—the spectre of my solitude—the besetting demon of a ceaseless persecution; shall no longer scare me with

humiliation and debasement. Zorilda will never purchase repose at Algernon's cost. How can such things be? Does not true affection identify itself with the object on which it rests? Would not 'Who was she?' be a death knell of my happiness still more appalling to my heart than the inquiry which now condemns me *alone* to obscurity and shame! Never will I repay by base ingratitude the kindness which fostered a houseless child of want. I will fulfil my sad destiny, and pray for courage to meet the sting which awaits me. I shall be assisted from above, and Mr. Playfair's counsel will support my tottering steps. The path of duty is often one of difficulty and fatigue, but it is safe. There are no precipices along the way.

"Algernon, my heart is breaking, and my selfish pen lingers amongst its sorrows, instead of exercising what little energy remains in the endeavour to recal you from a road which will lead to destruction if you continue to pursue its course. You have fallen amongst evil advisers, who are beginning their work by shaking those principles which Mr. Playfair says are our only

pillars of strength—our only rock and refuge in the hour of temptation. Your self-denying parents intend to sacrifice the joy of holding you in their arms this summer, that you may profit by Lord Turnstock's invitation to accompany him on the Continent—*profit* did I say? Alas! how foreign from my thoughts is the idea which that word conveys. No, dear Algernon, you will never gain by his example, and I weep as I contemplate your growing attachment to his society. I find in all your letters now something that spoils the pleasure which I used to feel in talking to you. Why is this, unless because the sympathy which was wont to knit our pursuits is fading away?

"You tell me, too, that I must change; you say that I am a rustic—that I am not skilled in music—that I am too independent, and want that softness (perhaps from your description I should rather call it langour), which you tell me is the most attractive feature of female character. Alas! that I am very imperfect and very ignorant, a very cursory glance into my own heart too fatally convinces me every day; but

my self reproach does not fall where you would point it. Why should I desire to be no longer a rustic? Is not the retirement in which I live better suited to the unhappy—the nameless orphan, than those scenes in which 'Who is she?' would be the brand of degradation? Is not my simple song, to which you once loved to sit and listen, adapted to my lowly lot, and the natural language of a sorrowing heart? Why should I regret that I am not versed in the mechanism of instrumental music. What have I to do with an admiring audience?

"Yet do not believe me insensible to the charms of melody. I am young, and might improve with opportunity. To make the harp respond to the sadness which dwells within, would be a delightful companionship, but it is denied to me, and I must not repine. Oh no, there is but one murmur in my breast, but one murmur on my tongue, and from my pen.

"Why am I thus forsaken? Why this homeless, houseless, friendless thing? This is the rankling thorn—the sharp arrow which festers and corrodes my vitals—which haunts me in

visions of the night, and paralizes every energy of soul by day. All other ills I can bear; and believe that they are good for me. You tell me that the pretty folly, the imploring weakness, the passive non-resistance of Lord Turnstock's sister, are fascinating; and you want me to copy without having seen the original. Much as I love to try and please you, and grateful as I feel for your wish to render me more capable of doing so, I cannot promise docility in this respect. Dear Mr. Playfair's words are engraven on my memory, and his very last letter repeats them. He bids me follow nature, and avoid every species of affectation. He reminds me that there are two glossaries which interpret the same words by different methods; that the timid supplication, the credulous innocence, the nervous sensibility, so captivating in a young beauty, are explained by far other terms in wives, sisters, daughters, and known in them by the harsher epithets of troublesome helplessness, ignorance, and fatiguing egotism, when the vapouring dreams of a youthful gallant are so-

bered into the honest but too often uncourteous phrase of husband, father, brother.

"This advice may seem to have no application to one who is a stranger to *all* the endearing relations of life, who has never known the blessing of those tender ties which bind the heart in sweet, yet wholesome, bondage; but truth is always the same. Let me pursue my homely track unseen. It will lead me to the quiet grave, where all my sorrows will have an end, but oh! my dearest Algernon, beware of the vortex into which *you* are gliding; your parents can not supply your increasing demands upon their resources. They already feel your extravagance. Fly temptation, while it is still in your power to break the spell. You are undone if you accompany the Marquess. Oh! do not plunge us in despair. Mr. Playfair has the worst opinion of your associates, and I believe has written a warning letter to your father, suggested by his knowledge of Lord Turnstock's general character; I write in secret, and this will reach you by a private hand; farewell," &c.

Zoé's voice would once have roused Algernon to any enterprize, or deterred him from any undertaking; but though he loved her better than all things else, she was distant, pleasure present. Her melancholy forebodings cast a gloom over his mind, and at length grew so distasteful, that he resolved to adopt a new language in his correspondence with her; pretending to be influenced by her advice, he promised to be on his guard against the allurements which she dreaded, assuring her that, sensible of the errors into which young men might be led, he designed to be very particular in his selection of acquaintance, should he feel himself so far engaged to accompany his friends to the Continent, that he could not break through the arrangement. The heart is of easy faith, when it wishes to believe, and the innocent Zorilda, who knew nothing of the world, except what she had heard of its snares from the instructor of her youth, seized with joy on the happy omen; and the roses of health again bloomed on her pallid cheek, with all the freshness of spring.

"Beloved Algernon," she would exclaim, while training the jessamine which was taught to decorate his favourite seat, or visiting with thoughtful tenderness the animals committed to her care, "you will never be led away from these pure delights. The blandishments of vice shall vainly attempt to dazzle, and its wicked artifices to entangle, my Algernon, who will return unpolluted by the influence of bad example. These sweet flowers will have new charms for him, and I shall proudly deliver up my trust when I show him these birds of brilliant wing, his dogs, and all his play-fellows so grown, so beautified, under my guardianship."

Zorilda's hours now glided swiftly as the weaver's shuttle. She was full of employment, and Algernon was the inspiring object of all she did or imagined; improving daily in loveliness of face and form, and glowing with animation, she seemed by her presence to cheer creation, and, like the blessed sun, to dispel every cloud that gathered on the horizon.

While Algernon was away from home, his mother, who never reflected much on any thing,

the immediate pressure of which on her external senses did not force itself upon her mind, resumed her cheerfulness, and finding in Zorilda all that the sweetest filial duty could bestow; treated her once more with as much affection as her selfish nature could feel. Mr. Hartland loved her as a daughter, and amongst the dependents of every degree she was considered as an angel of light who had descended from Heaven, to shower mercy and consolation on the poor, the sick, and the afflicted. As Zorilda avoided strangers with the greatest anxiety, she was seldom seen, and as she never left Henbury, except to go to the parish church, in which a curtain round the pew where she sat, and a veil on her bonnet, afforded all the privacy which she sought, it is not surprising that the fame of her beauty had not gone much abroad.

While Algernon was absent too, the motive for seeing company being removed, the family assumed more than their usual habits of economy, to enable Mrs. Hartland to indulge her vanity, in providing for the excesses of her son, whose constantly increasing demands were found-

ed on false pretences; and his parents were imposed upon, by a belief that they were aiding his advancement in life, while in reality they ministered to every species of extravagance. Zorilda was the presiding genius, who by her skill and activity achieved all Mrs. Hartland's purposes without compromising a single duty; and though every expense was regulated with the strictest attention, the interests of those whose claims on benevolence had ever been accredited, were not forgotten; and this admirable girl contrived to transfer to her friends the praises which were due to herself alone. The cultivation of her mind was her sole recreation: a fine talent for drawing, diversified her amusements, and had it not been for the thorn at the heart, which busy occupation sometimes concealed, but which no effort could extract, her life might have presented as near a resemblance to what may be imagined of higher spirits, whose existence is compounded of love and knowledge, as had ever been witnessed on earth.

Algernon went abroad with his friend the Marquess without returning home to take leave;

and Mrs. Hartland revelled in all the novelty of an heroic act of self-denial, which would bring about the accomplishment of her object in the natural death, as she prognosticated, of that attachment which was the bane of her ambition.

It was many years since Mrs. Gordon, the younger sister of Mrs. Hartland, had visited her friends in England; and low spirits occasioned by her son's departure having been urged by his mother as an additional plea in her present invitation, it obtained a favourable answer; and the pleasure of a family meeting in prospect in some degree compensated for the privation to which she had condemned herself; while Zorilda, whose eye governed every department, found in making preparation for the coming guests a source of added employment which helped to banish painful thoughts. She had heard much of Mrs. Gordon from Mr. Playfair, and longed, with eager curiosity, to see with her own eyes one of whom he spoke with such enthusiastic admiration, and of whom she could only remember how kind she was to

a gipsey child At *that* time Zorilda was a prodigal of friendship, because she did not want any larger store than Henbury supplied; but she felt now, that if indeed Mrs. Gordon were to prove such a being as she had been represented, her society would be a jewel above all price.

The Gordons arrived, and Mr. Playfair's portrait was not exaggerated. Much has been said against those sudden and sentimental attachments, to which the female sex is accused of being especially addicted: and we are not desirous of weakening the force of ridicule, which is justly ascribable to vows of eternal friendship made at sight; but there is a sympathy between kindred souls, which, as it will always exist in nature, we may be permitted to hope will escape condemnation, and never be confounded with the transitory illusions of romance. Such a sympathy almost immediately drew Mrs. Gordon and Zorilda to each other, and every day's experience confirmed the mutual attraction. Mr. and Mrs. Gordon inspired the idea of having been shut up in an ark with a chosen band, and "all

appliances and means to boot," for preserving every intellectual and social energy in constant play, untainted by the vices or the follies of a surrounding world.

It may be imagined by some, who hold a widely extended intercourse with mankind to be requisite to liberal views and enlightened understandings, that such a description must necessarily imply narrow minds, and limited information; but nothing could be more mistaken than such a conclusion. In our present state of civilization, dark and secluded must be that recess into which books and opinions do not find their way, and perhaps it may be truly said of various kinds of knowledge, that it is not unusually found in an inverse proportion with the distance from its source. Whatever may be the truth, as a general remark, the fact was, that in the particular instance with which we are concerned at present, the Scotch visitors who now added to the family circle at Henbury, appeared to Zorilda to be no other than the genii of some more favoured planet, invested with the keys of all those sacred stores from which the best posses-

sions of mankind are derived. Her clear intelligence and brilliant fancy, which had never before "sparkled in collision," now expanded in a congenial atmosphere, and the innocent Zoé was surprised by the powers of comprehension awakened in her mind by the talisman of such society as she enjoyed for the first time in her short life.

Mr. Playfair had been a mine of intellect, but the parental interest which he felt for his pupil, induced caution in the encouragement of those quick sensibilities which he foresaw would prove the bane of her happiness. He had therefore always led her to such studies as exercised her reason more than her imagination; and had endeavoured to repress every tendency to excitement in a character of such refined texture and vivid glow, that he dreaded its future contact with a world in which so little would be found in sympathy with its delicate structure. What rapture, was it not natural to think, did Zorilda now experience in meeting with her *beau ideal* of female friendship in Mrs. Gordon, of whom she became almost a worshipper!

No human beings, born in the Antipodes of

each other, could be more entirely unlike than Mrs. Hartland and her sister. The latter, who was by some years the younger of the two, had lived from her childhood with an uncle who resided in Edinburgh, and held a high place amongst the literati of his time. Under the auspices of this relation, who was equally distinguished by his learning and worth, Eugenia Robinson had enjoyed advantages which few young females possess, and of which still fewer at the present day, are inclined to avail themselves when offered. Mingling continually in company with men whose conversation bore testimony to their genius and pursuits, she had opportunity for indulging a thirst after all manner of solidly valuable acquisition, without, happily for herself, incurring any of those stupid taunts with which ignorance so frequently and successfully frightens away a spirit of inquiry, or on the other hand attracting that sickly applause, which, by flattering human weakness, often substitutes a contemptible vanity for the genuine desire of improvement in mental cultivation.

Eugenia Robinson was not set up as a prodigy, nor was there the slightest parade in her education; but she lived in a capital where it is still the fashion to wear heads and hearts, and where she therefore found that she might think without being called a *Blue*, and feel without being styled a *romancer*. In the midst of that society which her uncle brought together at his house, Eugenia met Mr. Gordon, and after a time, marriage cemented a union which had long been acknowledged by reciprocal preference, before it was confirmed at the altar. Never did Hymen's torch light home a happier pair, and the flame is not extinguished, but burns more purely and brightly in the tranquil atmosphere of domestic life, than while it was hurried to and fro, along the varying currents of hope and fear.

The wise man's prayer, "give me neither poverty nor riches," was granted to them, and retiring to Drumcairn, a pleasant spot in Aberdeenshire, they realized all that poets dream of conjugal felicity. They had no children, but this was not a source of repining, first because

they firmly believed that every dispensation of Heaven is ordered by unerring judgment, while that of mortal man is fallible and short sighted; and secondly, because they were happy in each other, and there was no craving void for vain wishes to occupy. Their days were passed in the exercise of practical benevolence, not wasted in the busy idleness of fashionable life; and their amusements were inspired by rural objects, music, in which Mrs. Gordon was a proficient, and an excellent library, which was constantly augmenting its stores, by the addition of every new book worthy of a place upon its shelves.

Contentment, activity, and independence brought forth all their fruit at Drumcairn, and Zorilda, who had felt through secret instinct that such things *might* be, though she had never seen them, opened her whole soul to the genial influence of her new associates, as the butterfly unfolds its radiant wing to the sunbeam.

Mrs. Gordon understood her thoughts before they found expression, and entered into all her feelings while yet she believed them hidden in her own breast; sympathizing or repress-

ing, correcting or informing, as acquaintance increased, and occasion suggested; but the grateful heart of our gentle Zoé was not estranged from its early ties by the novelty of that enchantment which an ardent mind experiences in gazing, for the first time, on its own image in the bosom of a friend; like that of Eve reflected from the clear waters of Paradise, when newly awakened from sleep, she approached with timid step, now advancing, now retiring, to grasp the lovely form which gave a second self to view. Zorilda, in the retirement of her chamber, often breathed the silent murmur, "Oh why do sisters differ thus?" but her heart replied, that Mrs. Hartland deserved her gratitude, and she was Algernon's mother. Her innocent prayers were then sent up to Heaven for strength to perform her course in the path of duty, and she would fall into a rosy slumber, dreaming of happy virtuous love and devoted friendship.

The character of Mr. Gordon resembled that of her friend and tutor, which quickly secured him a place in her affections. She was charmed

with the clearness of his views, and the straightforward integrity of his practice; but the more Zorilda was captivated by society thus congenial, the more sedulously did she endeavour, by redoubled attention, to avoid exhibiting to her benefactors how much they lost by comparison with their guests. Every moment which could be snatched from those cares which Zorilda never neglected, was employed in cultivating the present opportunity of enjoyment; and Mrs. Hartland secretly triumphed in the fulfilment of her project. She saw, in the mutual attachment of her sister and her ward, the future feasibility of sending the latter off to Scotland, should Algernon's travels not have effaced all dangerous recollections; and in this view she had for the first time an appearance of unselfishness by promoting a companionship which afforded gratification to those around her. Pride prevented her from divulging her fears.

"If," said she to herself, "my son is cured of his childish folly, there is no use in exposing it. If, on the other hand, he should relapse into any nonsense, it will be time enough to act.

'Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.' I might restrain my sister's affection for Zoé were I to clog it with future demands, so I will let things work their own way, and take advantage of results as occasion may require."

This was Mrs. Hartland's policy; Zorilda had other motives for her silence, and a tremulous delicacy of feeling prevented her from reposing in the bosom of her dearest friend those hopes and fears which disturbed the serenity of her own; but Mrs. Gordon knew human nature, and her sister's individual character. The first taught her to believe it very possible that her nephew might not be proof against such attractions as those of her young friend, while the latter assured her that nothing could be less consonant with the wishes of his mother than that Zorilda should exercise any influence over his affections. These abstract surmises were brought to clearer testimony by a conversation after dinner one day, which turned on genealogy.

"There is nothing like a good family," said Mrs. Hartland; "even money is not of so much consequence; and for my part I would rather

see my only child dead at my feet than that he should bring disgrace upon himself and all belonging to him by marrying any one of low birth."

Though Zorilda had resolved to command her actions, she had no power to control her looks; and the sudden transition from a crimson blush to deadly pale, expressed more than she wished to communicate, and revealed sentiments which no force of language could contradict.

"My love," said Mrs. Gordon, as she rose hastily from her chair, and went towards Zorilda, "I told you that you had walked too far. I saw that you were greatly fatigued. You are quite overcome now by the heat of this room, and must come with me directly into the fresh air." Zoé pressed the hand which was extended towards her, and accompanied her kind conductress.

When relieved from the restraint of observation on the part of those who knew all her little history, she burst into tears; and when the soothing caresses of Mrs. Gordon had tranquil-

lized her spirits sufficiently to permit of utterance, her first anxiety was to explain her emotion without touching on its principal spring.

"Oh!" exclaimed Zorilda, "what a misfortune, is it not? to be thus a prey to the most agonizing sensations upon a subject altogether beyond the scope of my power to elucidate or control! I am ashamed of my weakness, of my rebellion against that Almighty Being who decrees my trials, who my bible teaches me to believe, 'loveth whom He chasteneth, and scourgeth the son whom he would save.' Is it a crime to be thus forlorn; the sport of every wind, or like the wreck of some sea-foundered skiff, a severed fragment floating on the ocean of life, unknown, unclaimed, unacknowledged? Alas! I have tried to school my warring soul, and bend it to its burthen. I have prayed to Him who can alone strengthen our frail nature, but I have prayed in vain; I am not heeded. I am an outcast in Heaven as on earth."

"Beloved child," replied the tender friend, who now sought to pour balsam on a wounded spirit, "you pray not yet in fulness of *trust;*

you importune, but you do not confide. It is sometimes permitted us to understand the discipline inflicted by Him who desireth not the death of a sinner, who will never allow us to be tempted beyond our power to endure. In Heaven there are no pedigrees; God will have your whole heart, give it freely to Him who gives you all. Bless Him for the dangers which you have escaped; His mercy has snatched you from the perils which encompassed your infant head, and a day may come——"

"Never! never!" answered Zorilda, "it is a vain hope. Perhaps I shewed less presence of mind to day than I might have summoned to my aid on another occasion, because that long walk, which you, dearest Mrs. Gordon, chid me for adventuring, was undertaken this morning in quest of some information respecting my hapless tale. While resting yesterday beneath the hawthorn hedge, I overheard a labourer telling our gardener that a young man had lately come into the neighbourhood to marry one of our farmers' daughters, and professed to have seen me in former days, as well

as to know how I fell into the hands of a gipsey horde. Breathless and agitated I listened with the deepest attention, but the men were walking forward, and I caught no more of their conversation. On my return to the house I consulted with Rachael, that faithful creature who was placed by the kindness of Mrs. Hartland to watch over my tender years. She loves me dearly, and her affection has often been a refuge for my sorrows. She knew at once, by my account, who the person was to whom the labourer alluded, and promised to make minute inquiry; but my impatience would not brook delay, and after a sleepless night, I set off, accompanied by her, at early dawn to see and speak myself to the stranger. Buoyed up at one moment by hope; at another, trembling with fear, I flew along, regardless of distance, and reached the cottage were he was to be found; I saw, and conversed with him. My curiosity has been punished. Alas! the little he could tell, has only served to add bitterness to my former ignorance. He told me that he pursued the gipsey group, to which I afterwards

belonged, for the purpose of obtaining payment for a horse from the very man who purchased me, and who was the greatest rogue of the whole party, as also their chief. At length my informer found these wild people encamped upon the southern coast, and while he remained to transact his own business, he witnessed a negociation, which put the lawless band in possession of the miserable Zoé. A woman, dressed in mean attire, and having the appearance of a soldier's wife, offered me for sale. The bargain was made. The man who bought me inquired my name, and the unfeeling wretch who could so barter her weeping infant for a sum of money, replied, 'You may call her Zorilda. I have just landed with her from Spain, and the sooner you change your quarters the better.' The gipsey chief next inquired of the woman whether she had a husband, fearing that the father might follow, to reclaim his child. 'No, no,' answered the she wolf, whom, I am now tortured by supposing to have been my mother; 'he is laid low enough. He was killed, and will not rise from the grave to trouble you. I must

not linger here. Hide the child till you arrive in another part of the country, and set off with your prize as fast as you can.'

"This is the sum and substance of all the information I could glean. The woman who made traffic of her offspring, would not tell the gipsies to what regiment her husband belonged, nor mention his name. I have, therefore, not the slightest clue by which to make further scrutiny, and the only knowledge which I have gained, deprives me of the humble consolation which I before enjoyed, of dreaming that I was once folded in the arms of an adoring parent, who, however lowly her lot of life, still loved and pressed me to a mother's bosom. The keenness of this disappointment, and the certainty that the moral qualities of her who gave me birth were as debased as her station, peculiarly unfitted me to bear with calmness the sentence which Mrs. Hartland pronounced to-day upon a vulgar origin.

"Oh, why are my feelings so acute? Sprung from the lowest abyss, the very dregs of my species, why are my thoughts so proud? Why

is my will thus rebellious? If, like the humble hind who tills the earth, I could be satisfied with the rank assigned by Providence, I could be happy; I could raise my hands to heaven, and bless my creator in the temple of nature; bend to my rustic toil, and repose in peace; but there is a war within, which murders rest. I feel as if I had been formed for another destiny, and my spirit cannot submit in meekness to this degradation."

"My Zorilda," answered Mrs. Gordon, "you have not reduced religion to practice, and your trials have been sufficient to render the task of obedience severe; but it must be learned. The morbid sensibility which you encourage blinds your understanding, and you draw false conclusions. The inference which *I* derive from your dialogue with the stranger this morning is directly opposite to that which you deduce. The soldier's wife was not your mother. Nay, I should decide against her having even been your nurse. The strong instincts of nature are seldom violated, and amid all the depravity of human kind there are few instances of such un-

natural character as you take for granted in the present case. Zorilda is not a name by which an English soldier's wife would have been likely to call her daughter; neither would a woman who sold her own child, and whose husband was no longer living to upbraid her, or seek its recovery, have had any apparent motive for the concealment which she desired, in the speedy decampment of the gipsies. Be assured that you are rather the offspring of Spanish parents, probably of rank and consideration. Silk and velvet, of which materials your dress was made when first my sister saw you, are not the common manufactures which clothe inferior people. Who has had the misfortune to lose you, is a mystery which I wish we were enabled to solve, but all that I *do* know convinces me that you are not the child of her who sold you to the gipsey gang."

"Dear and kind friend," exclaimed Zorilda, "how grateful am I for the tender feeling with which you try to mitigate my pain. I will not repel your efforts—I will adopt your creed—it shall be mine, and I will endeavour to believe

that I was indeed stolen from my home by the cruel being who passed me again into stranger hands. But what a fate is mine, when such a surmise is the best consolation which can be offered. Had I been left in my native land, though torn from all I loved, I might have been brought up in the religion of my ancestors, and found an asylum in some friendly convent. You have no such refuge here for the unhappy."

"All England is the refuge of the destitute," replied Mrs. Gordon; "her bounteous shores have been pressed by royal fugitives, and this glorious land, this favoured soil, has sheltered kings as well as slaves from the tyranny of other climes. Shall my Zoé repine at having imbibed the doctrines of a purer faith than that of Spain? The heart may freely dedicate itself to God without the call of matin or of vesper bell. We have altars every where, and do not want the convent's gloomy pile to enshrine our prayers. Those sad receptacles are frequently the scene of guilt, and the prison walls of the religious recluse, too often contain devotion of every kind but that to Heaven."

"Oh forgive my impetuosity; I stand convicted of my error. Be my counsellor; speak peace to a wounded spirit, and you shall find in Zorilda a docile as well as a grateful heart," said the lovely Spaniard, with an expression of countenance so contrite, so imploring, as to touch Mrs. Gordon to the soul; but afraid of indulging affection which would be soon interrupted by her own departure from Henbury, she repressed the tear which rose to her eye, and looking at her young and beautiful companion with an air of encouraging kindness, she kissed, raised her gently from the seat on which they had been conversing, and leading her towards the house, emphatically uttered those inspired words of the royal Psalmist, "Whom have I in Heaven but thee; and whom do I desire on earth beside thee?" adding, "When we can answer this passionate and affecting inquiry with sincerity, and feel that there is no idol dividing the empire of our hearts with that being who will not reign over a disputed kingdom, then, and not till then, shall the distracted bosom find repose."

Zorilda started, coloured violently, and looked as if her heart would burst its prison without permission from her will, but just as her lips were going to obey its impulse, she checked the accents as they were escaping, and after a momentary pause, during which a short but dreadful conflict seemed to convulse her frame, she caught the arm of her friend, and calling up all the fortitude of virtuous resolution to her aid, exclaimed—

"Yes! be it so; God is the orphan's portion. He is the defender of the fatherless. You have touched a hidden chord. The world is of Proteus form; and even in such seclusion as this, its roses or its thorns can occupy the imagination, and divert the soul from its devotion to the Supreme. I will bind your words upon my heart! I will remember that within my own breast there is an altar of dedication to receive my vows. The offering only is wanting to complete the sacrifice, and you have furnished the test by which I am to seek the victim."

"Make no vows, my child," said Mrs. Gordon; "freedom is with noble minds the straitest

bondage. Endure your trials; kiss the rod. Believe that affliction comes not from the dust; it is sent from on high to purify and exalt. The murmur of irritability, and the gloomy silence of a sullen temper, are alike remote from that submission which your God requires to fit you for the glorious society of angels. Should an earthly friend be wanted by my Zoé, while I live, remember Drumcairn, and fly to its peaceful retreat."

These words sank too deeply for reply. The Gordons returned to Scotland; and in an hour after they drove from the door. While Zorilda was plunged in the deepest grief and lamentation, a letter arrived to announce the approach of Algernon.

CHAPTER IX.

> "Oft expectation fails, and most oft there where most it promised." SHAKSPEARE.

THE difference between hope and fruition is a hacknied theme, and there are few pleasures belonging to man, of which it may not be said, with Congreve, that

> "'Tis expectation makes the blessing dear."

Scarcely had Zorilda bid adieu to the friends whose society had afforded that fulness and variety of enjoyment which constitute the longest as well as most delightful measure of remembered time, when in an hour of such desolation as a heart like hers, alive to the strongest impressions, could alone experience; the current of her grief was disturbed, as is the rivulet's gentle flow, when a fragment from the moun-

tain side dashes into the midst of the stream, breaking its silent waters into a thousand troubled eddies.

A letter from Algernon came to announce his intended return, and one brief fortnight would now give him back to the eyes and heart of her whose agitated spirits bore speaking testimony to the powerful hold which he possessed on her affections.

Two years had intervened since our hero left Henbury for Oxford. He had contrived, on various pretences, to lengthen his stay at Paris, till the University appeared to be altogether abandoned. Mrs. Hartland felt her son's absence severely, but it was some consolation to believe that he was extending his connections advantageously amongst people whose rank and consequence were conformable to the future dignity of his prospects. She likewise trusted, that present sacrifice of his society would be repaid by the perfect cure of his first love.

Algernon never failed to flatter the weakness of his parents, and while time and money were wasted in profligacy, a list of distinguished

names deceived them, gratified their vanity, and cheated them, through a series of vaunting lies, into the fond assurance, that their darling was the principal ornament of the Court of France. He had quarrelled with the Marquess of Turnstock, but concealed his separation from him, and the true motive of his present design to re-visit home at this moment, was in order to anticipate conjecture which might naturally arise when his Lordship's arrival in England unaccompanied by him, would lead to inquiry why they had parted from each other after being the "Castor and Pollux" of Oxford.

Zorilda had indeed often wondered at the frigid nature of that affection which could impose upon itself the pangs and penalties of such lengthened absence. She had often asked herself what spell had the power to charm the wanderer, and would then chide her heart for its jealous doubts. The intervals between Algernon's letters were much increased since he commenced his foreign travel, but Zorilda could account for this. "He knows that I have no money, and would spare me his mother's re-

proaches for the cost of frequent postage," said the innocent Zoé, who judged of others by herself. Every letter, too, when tried by the test which revealed its hidden sentiments, contained assurance of undying love which kindred flames developed, when, spite of her prohibition, inspired by

"Hope, kind cheat, fair fallacy,"

she held the paper to the fire, "pardoning the treason for the traitor's sake."

Zorilda's quick penetration had also remarked sundry abbreviations and blots in Algernon's late *despatches*, which might be truly so called in every sense of the word, and sighed as she recollected that a celebrated Madame de Staal, who lived in the age of Louis Quinze, had discovered the refrigeration of a lover's affection, in his voluntary choice of a short road when he used to conduct her home to her convent, after passing the day with her friends in Paris. Two sides of the triangle which formed the court of the convent would have afforded a longer *tête-à-tête* than the diagonal; yet the lover abridged opportunity by preferring the diagonal, and the

young Frenchwoman at once decided that he had ceased to be one, and would see him no more.

She was right, but though Zorilda felt the shortened words as much as Madame de Staal in her youth had felt the shortened way, she pleaded unavoidable haste, to excuse all apparent negligence or contempt, though the acuteness of her sensibility made her alive to the slightest change of temperature in affection. Even had her reasoning been more severe, it would not have stood proof against the first sound of the carriage wheels which announced Algernon's arrival within the gates of Henbury. The most subtile arguments are but feeble weapons when opposed to true love, when the latter is re-inforced by presence of the beloved object. One look is sufficient to put to flight a world of reasoning, and Zorilda did not wait to see her truant, before her beating heart proclaimed full pardon of every omission or commission of which he had ever been guilty. Algernon's letter inclosed an open note, which his mother as usual read before she suffered it to leave her

hands. To *her* eyes it only contained a few careless words, calculated to lull every apprehension of repose. She could find nothing more than—

"Dear Zo, I am coming and am in too great a bustle to say more than a few words. I am longing to see all my four-footed favourites. Send to Norton for my greyhound and setters, which I left with him; and tell him that I expect their *education to be finished* by the time I see them again. I long also to re-visit my hawks and pheasants, which you have been nursing for me; and I long to see you too, and tell you of all my adventures. Your's truly, dear Zo, in *fire* haste, A. H."

Mrs. Hartland contrasted this meagre demonstration with the "dearest mother" and "most affectionate son," addressed to herself, and presented this blotted billet to the blushing girl with an air of triumph.

Zorilda read it without making any comment, but longed to be alone to try whether "fire haste" might not extract something more from the paper which she held in her trembling hand.

The intelligent reader has, no question, often remarked, that people whose tempers are not governed by any other director than their passions, are kind or unkind to others as they happen to be pleased or displeased themselves. This was Mrs. Hartland's habit, and Zorilda's patience was often put to severe trial; but the mother's spirits were now elated, and all around shared their *couleur de rose.* She folded up her packet, and smiling benignantly on her young friend, desired her to go, and give the necessary orders to prepare for her son's return.

"Algernon will be of age on the 25th," said Mrs. Hartland, "and this is an event of importance in my family. If he comes before his birthday, we shall have a double joy to celebrate. Childish things must henceforth be put away, and my son must now assume the manly character in which he is called from this time to act a new part upon the stage of life; aye, and I trust also a *distinguished* one. The boyish follies of Algernon's early youth are no longer to be remembered, and one-and-twenty is an age"——

The young Spaniard's eloquent cheek and eye were beginning to betray a painful consciousness of the secret meaning which these words were designed to convey. She understood, with rapid comprehension, the full tenour of this commencing oration; but the entrance of a servant, who came to say that a messenger had just arrived on horseback at full speed, bringing a letter which he had orders not to confide to any other hands than those of Mr. or Mrs. Hartland, offered an opportunity which Zorilda instantaneously seized to glide out of the room, and snatching up her straw hat as she passed quickly through the hall, she flew into the open air to give free vent to feelings too agonizing to be suppressed, too proud to be revealed, to her who had excited them.

"Break not yet, poor heart," said Zorilda aloud, as she gained her favourite solitude; "such tumult of the soul can find no place in Heaven, whither all my thoughts should bend. *There* all is peace, celestial peace! Oh, she is a skilful archer; every arrow is securely aimed, every poisoned shaft is winged unerringly. Did she

not say that "childish things are to be laid aside?" and what *so* childish as love for the nameless, friendless, orphan-gipsey? I understand it all too well, yet why *too* well? Ungrateful that I am! Shall I repine that I am enabled to perceive the dangers which beset my path? and do I call myself unfriended while the spirit of her who so lately blessed me with almost a mother's tenderness, still hovers here? Yes, in this spot used we to hold sweet counsel. Here did I listen to the soothing voice of comfort, here taste the balm of sacred wisdom as from her lips distilled the pure stream of divine instruction, which poured daily on my ear. Though absent, she shall teach me still, and I will pray in the silence of this fragrant breeze, to that Being who is never deaf to the supplicant's cry."

What breast unvitiated by the artificial world is not alive to the soft influence of nature, and what soul ever sought its God in sincerity and humiliation without finding relief? Zorilda rose from the mossy shrine, strengthened, refreshed, consoled, and sitting down where she

had knelt before, exclaimed with fervour, "Remember Drumcairn!" "Those were her parting words as she folded me to her bosom. Yes, I will remember, and with thankfulness, that there is yet an earthly asylum for Zorilda." A slight rustling amongst the branches which formed a screen behind where she sat, and threw their protective shade over her head, disturbed her meditations; and starting up she looked around, but could only discover by an increased movement of the leaves, that something had brushed through them.

"What a fool I am!" said she; "shall I fear my old and faithful companions, and start at a bird? But hah! what is here? a letter, and for me!" She seized the paper with trembling haste, and casting a timid glance around, hurried breathlessly back to the shrubbery from which she had strayed, and closed its gate before she dared venture to break the seal, and read the following lines:

"ZORILDA,

"There is one at least in the world who asks not '*Who is she?*' but who knows you to

be virtuous, lovely, and unhappy; one who can behold in you the pedigree of a noble soul, whencesoever it be derived; who has gazed more than once unseen upon your streaming eyes uplifted in prayer to Heaven; and listened to those sighs which rend your heart, yet without intrusion on your sorrows. The friend who now addresses you, has not taken advantage of his situation to possess himself of your secrets, if you have any which you desire should be unrevealed, and his motive in thus alarming, is to warn you against dangers which threaten your peace. Walk no more beyond the enclosure of your shrubbery, till you hear from your unknown guardian that you are safe in doing so; and rely on the fidelity of one, who cannot tell you more at present than that he is devoted to your interests, over which he watches with constant vigilance. Beware of wandering by moonlight, and alone."

Zorilda was nearly overcome with terror and astonishment. Unused to consider herself an object of interest to any one, the liveliest gratitude would have possessed her unsuspecting

heart, if the dread of some impending ill did not predominate over every calmer feeling. From whence came the warning which she had just received? It was not the hand-writing of Mr. Playfair, and if it were, why should he be thus mysterious? He would have pointed explicitly to the approaching danger, and as openly advised the best means of avoiding it. This anonymous intimation was perhaps itself a snare; yet it prescribed caution, and seemed to be dictated by truth and kindness.

"What shall I do? Oh whither shall I turn for counsel?" said Zorilda. "If I tell Mr. Hartland, what profit will accrue? He cannot lock me up, nor place a guard in attendance on my steps. Mrs. Hartland would call me a heroine of romance, and I should be derided, ridiculed, insulted. What a time is this to have lost the true friends who would have been my pilots! But God is every where, He will direct me, if with a single heart, I implore His heavenly guidance."

The sound of hasty footsteps put an end to Zorilda's reflections. She folded the paper

quickly, over which she had been musing, and had scarcely time to conceal it, when Rachel, a faithful domestic already introduced to the reader, ran towards her, out of breath—

"Miss Zoé, Miss Zoé, make no delay; my mistress is calling for you, and angry that you cannot be found. Master is from home too; not expected till dinner, which is ordered an hour later than usual, and we have been put into a great flutterment by news at the house; but I am not to tell you any thing about it, only to find, and send you in, without loss of time."

Zorilda trembled so exceedingly, that she could hardly obey the summons, and immediately concluded, that whatever circumstances had occurred in her absence, bore some reference to the mysterious communication which had been made to her. Bewildered by the variety of alarms which thronged upon her mind, she advanced with breathless agitation, and having reached the house, heard Mrs. Hartland's voice loudly employed in giving directions to have a horse saddled, and a servant in readiness to set off in quest of her husband, who had gone

that morning to attend a board of magistrates at some distance from Henbury.

Zorilda, pale as death, gained the apartment from whence she heard these orders issuing, and felt sinking with apprehension and exhaustion, when she was met by a countenance in which exultation, impatience, resentment, and solicitude struggled for mastery.

"Where is it that you hide yourself in this unfeeling manner?" said Mrs. Hartland, with impetuous eagerness. "Is it not too provoking that I should be left alone, and that nobody can be found in a moment of such agitation as the present. Lord Marchdale lies at the point of death. He has had a paralytic stroke, and is speechless. Mr. Humphries, the head steward, who has long been in our interests, has sent off an express to give secret intelligence of the event; and here, by the most unlucky chance imaginable, my son is far away, and I know not how to direct to him. Mr. Hartland, who hardly ever leaves home, is absent; and even you too are moping idly in some hole or corner, and can nowhere be found. *You* have no per-

sonal interest, it is true, in the matter, but it is intolerable that you should be out of the way when my hand shakes so that I cannot hold a pen."

The harshness, as well as unreasonableness, of this attack, repelled the softer sympathies of Zorilda's heart, which were ever ready at the call of affection; and summoning as much firmness as she could command, she calmly replied,

"Madam, as you had no cause to anticipate this event, you would have been the first to censure Mr. Hartland's indolence, had he neglected the business which engages him this morning; and as to me, I am not aware of disobeying your commands in taking a walk at no great distance from the house. I am ready now, though *my* hand is not very steady, to write as you shall dictate."

"I shall remember your insolent coldness," said Mrs. Hartland; "write directly to Mr. Humphries, thank him in my name for the zeal which *he* has shewn in our affairs, desire him to keep a strict eye over the property, and to refuse admittance to all interlopers, and—"

"Oh," interrupted Zorilda, "do not accuse me of that which is foreign from my nature. Can any good or evil happen at Henbury in which I do not share? Are you not my benefactors? But you reject my sympathy with disdain, and then reproach me for the want of it. Let me prove how much I feel upon the present occasion by conjuring you not to commit yourself by writing such a letter as you propose to the steward. If, as I have heard you say, Mr. Hartland is heir to the estates, as well as to the title of Marchdale, you will owe nothing to the officiousness of this Humphries; but should Lord Marchdale have had power over his fortune, and exercised it to your disadvantage, how will this precipitancy advance your claims, or redress the evil? Again, a paralytic stroke is not always fatal. Lord Marchdale may recover, and then you are at the mercy of a sycophant who may turn your impatience to account with his master, and represent you in unfavourable colours, to your future ruin. Let me return your acknowledgments for a letter which you

have opened in the absence of Mr. Hartland, and enter no farther into the subject of it."

"You are right, Zoé; I forgive you," answered Mrs. Hartland; "make haste, give a guinea to the messenger, see that he is properly taken care of, and despatch him without delay."

Zorilda executed the task which her own good sense and delicacy had suggested; but who can describe the state of her mind, when, having performed her commission, she had time to reflect on her own situation, rendered doubly precarious and painful, by the increased distance which she perceived the near prospect of rank and fortune would place between her and all she loved?

Mr. Hartland returned, and even his phlegmatic temperament was excited by the news which awaited him. Visions of future greatness now absorbed the attention of him and his wife, though they took various hues, according with the difference of their characters. Mr. Hartland shewed no impatience, but, assuming a sort of sullen pomp, seemed to feel himself already in possession of the distinction which he antici-

pated; while Mrs. Hartland, in an agony of "hope deferred," endured a perpetual fever of mind from the restlessness and impotent activity of her disposition. Day after day passed without bringing farther tidings, and the *final* account from Marchdale-court was necessary to allay those apprehensions which embittered her golden dreams.

There is one character still more irritating than that of an *ex post facto* prophet, and that is a person who, not waiting for events, begins, while they are yet pending, to foresee disastrous issues in the interval between causes and effects, without casting a shadow of blame upon themselves for having acquiesced in that very conduct, on the failure of which their angry sagacity is afterwards employed too late to prevent whatever may be its result. Mrs. Hartland was of this description. The mob principle, that every one must be wrong who does not glide with full sails before the wind, influenced all her decisions of every kind; and though in the present case it was obvious, that while Lord Marchdale *lived* she could not receive the joyful infor-

mation of his *death*, she could not impute the silence of Mr. Humphries to any other source than offence at the frigid style of Zorilda's reply to his letter. "I *saw plainly* how it would be. I *knew* that Mr. Humphries would be affronted. We have evidently lost a friend who would have watched over our interests, and all because I was too much agitated to write myself. I should have conciliated this worthy man, and flattered his vanity with assurance of my entire reliance on his zeal and discretion; but people who know nothing of the world will put in a word of advice, and woe to all who give ear to their stupid counsels."

To these, and such like taunts, Zorilda had to listen, whenever her evil genius brought her within hearing of Mrs. Hartland's unceasing complaints; which were now received with less submission by her husband, as he began to feel himself rising in the scale of human dignity, and remembered that it was through *him* that the expected honours were to come.

"For Heaven's sake," he would sometimes say, "let my relation die in peace, my dear.

Would you have Mr. Humphries administer a dose of poison to hasten your victim out of the world, in order to accommodate your ambition?"

"Mr. Hartland you are becoming insufferable. Your torpor is more exasperating than the rage of a lion. I am sure, were it not for the sake of posterity, I wish that your relation may recover, and keep you out of an earldom which you are not fit for, and have too little feeling to value. My *son*, however, will one day grace a coronet of which his father is little worthy."

"I suppose that you would kill me also, to make way for your idol," retorted Mr. Hartland; "but we may all prove too tough for your wishes. Mind, I tell you that a paralytic stroke is not always a stroke unto death; and you may be punished yet for committing murder in your heart, if not with your hands. Take my advice, good lady, and keep yourself cool; or in vulgar phrase, do not reckon your chickens before they are hatched."

This was a new style of dialogue at Henbury,

and exceedingly shocked the gentle Zorilda; who, endeavouring to forget her own anxieties as much as possible, tried every effort in her power to soften these asperities and mediate between the belligerent parties, who never had quarrelled till now, when they seemed upon the eve of attaining the grand object of their common wishes.

"How strange the effect of what the world calls prosperity!" exclaimed this child of nature, when relieved from the irksome society of those with whom it was her lot to drag the heavy hours. "Who would desire to possess a few ideal distinctions, brief as shadowy, at the expense of all that is dear to the heart?"

Zorilda was debarred the luxury, not denied to many in this age, of communicating her thoughts to a distant friend. The power of purchasing this gratification was more than she could command, so entire was her dependence; and even if it had been permitted her to correspond with Mrs. Gordon, the necessity of shewing every line which she either wrote or received, would have neutralized the privilege.

"Let me thank God," said she, "that I have still the power of thought; still the blessed boon of self-communion left; and, oh may I use the gift to profit! examine my heart, probe its most secret recesses, and cultivate resignation to the will of Him who sees it good that I should be thus severely tried!"

When aspirations such as these would escape her lips, a bright gleam of hope sometimes succeeded, and painted Algernon in all the bloom of youthful joy, returning to the home of his happy childhood; called thither to embellish a higher sphere, elate with glad prospects, and placed in possession of power to shed happiness in every smile. Spite of every effort to repress the fond dreams of imagination, they would sometimes, too, indulge in weaving a golden future for herself. If Algernon had ceased to love, why did his letters still breathe the honied accents of a sentiment which he might pretend to forget? Was it generous to doubt his truth because his words were few? Was it reasonable to expect more lavish demonstration of an attachment so constrained by circumstances? Ar-

rived at full age, and raised to dignity and independence, might he not prevail with his parents to enter into his views?

Thoughts such as these were too welcome not to force their way, and if Zorilda had inclination, she wanted strengh to banish them always from her mind. A secret feeling would even picture the pleased surprise with which Algernon would hear her voice, already flexible and melodious, now improved by science and cultivation, and accompanied by the "mellow minstrelsy" of a Spanish guitar, on which Mrs. Gordon's tasteful tuition had rendered her a proficient.

How lovely was the expression of that eloquent eye! How touching the sounds which flowed from those ruby lips when hope's delightful inspirations came o'er her mind,

> "Like the sweet south
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour."

At length the time arrived which was to realize or blast the timid promises of faithful love; and on the same day, the evening of

which was to be blessed by Algernon's return, the dawn was ushered in by an express to announce the death of Lord Marchdale.

Suspense and irritation had brought Mrs. Hartland's mind to a state of quiescence through exhaustion, without effecting any improvement of temper. On the contrary, the spirit of bickering against her husband was ready as before, on the present occasion, and broke out into the following fretful complaint:

"Ay! when one is worn out with expecting, here comes this empty title at last; but not a word about the estates. As to the coronet, that was a thing of course, and no gratitude is due on that score; but if the property is left away, it would be much better that the title had gone along with it. You have always neglected my advice, Mr. Hartland, or we should not be indebted now to back-stairs informers for what we ought to know ourselves. It is ten to one but you have ruined the fortunes of your son by your indolent supineness."

"Can you not wait till the dead are buried?" answered the exasperated husband. "Did any

mortal, but yourself, ever hear of prying into a will before the body is laid in the grave? even the commonest decencies of life are violated by your rapacity."

"Pretty language, *indeed*," replied the ruffled dame; "but you may find, bye and bye, that my '*rapacity*,' or prudence, or whatever else you may please to call it, may have saved you from a jail."

Each party quitted the room by opposite doors in no very harmonious frame of mind: yet, spite of ill humour with each other, they were irresistibly excited by the intelligence just received. Men are said to be but "children of a larger growth," and certain it is that we should often be ashamed to confess to the world how a bauble can charm our imaginations.

Mr. Hartland was met, on quitting the apartment, by eager faces of attempted condolence and congratulation, mingled with the slavish wonder and submissiveness generated in vulgar minds by sudden accession of rank. The servants and dependants were peeping on tip-toe, shoving each other backwards and forwards to

catch the first glimpse of their master, and see whether he looked differently from his former self, since he had become a great lord; but the dread of discovering how much he was pleased with his new dignity, as also a certain fear of upstart claims which might at least be vexatious, and delay its attainment, induced him to refrain from his usual ride, and issue orders that no one should address him by any other than the ordinary appellation, till his return from Marchdale-court, for which place it would be necessary that he and his son should set out on the following day.

Mrs. Hartland gratified the people and herself by going out into the shrubbery, garden, farm-yard, etcetera; and wherever she could find a human being to greet her with the delightful sounds of "my Lady," and "your ladyship," she condescended to expatiate on the lofty acquirements which had descended on her house. One old woman, in the effervesence of her zeal and ignorance, styled her "your Majesty," which flattered so bewitchingly, that the salutation scarcely seemed ridiculous.

The express of the morning produced a very different effect on Zorilda, whose agitation was sufficient for her delicate frame, without this increase. These new honours had no charm for her, but seemed to raise a barrier in her path. Algernon was no longer Algernon; she was to meet Lord Hautonville, and a chill came over her heart as she tried to practise the unwonted and unwished-for sounds. Then the object of her soul's dearest attachment was to be snatched from her eyes, almost in the moment of meeting them; and though the recollection of her own danger was the last consideration to present itself, yet when remembrance of the letter which she had in her possession forced upon her mind a consciousness of the defenceless condition in which a few hours would leave her, she shuddered with terror of she knew not what, but felt such instinctive repugnance to proclaim her fears, and the cause of them, that she resolved, under accumulating difficulty, still to place her sole trust in that merciful assistance, the support of which her heart

began to acknowledge experimentally in moments of trial.

"Oh! will not one look repay me for all this uneasiness, if it beams with the affection of dear old times; and why do I admit these mean doubts to overwhelm me? I will cast them from me, and sit musing here no longer!"

So saying, Zorilda started from her reverie, and ran to put the last finish to her little preparations, by dressing every part of the house with fresh gathered flowers. After which she culled a bunch of

——— "Valley Lilies, whiter
"Than Leda's love,"

with which to decorate her marble brow, and had scarcely ended her simple toilette, when carriage wheels were heard. Mr. and Mrs. Hartland, followed by the servants, hastened to the hall. Zorilda, with beating heart, blanched cheek, and trembling knees, lingered on the stairs, unable to move, but the first accents of the well-known voice were, "Where is Zoé?" The vital glow re-animated her countenance,

and in a few short seconds she was folded in the arms of Algernon.

Never was the meeting of two lovers more rapturous. Zorilda's innocent and confiding nature tasted such blessed assurance in this joyful instant, as repaid an age of keenest anguish, while Algernon's astonished gaze, seemed to declare that no such loveliness had ever burst upon his senses, as met his eyes in the modest, yet dazzling beauty of her on whom they now were rivetted.

Zorilda drew back, surprised in her turn by the changes which time had wrought. Algernon was a perfect model of manly grace, and all the easy elegance and polish of fashionable society were added to the native symmetry which distinguished his appearance. A reproachful call from Mrs. Hartland, quickly interrupted this short-lived transport of uncertain bliss. Alas! it was never to return. Zorilda loved, and was beloved; but, she knew not why, she had not the same pleasure which she formerly felt in Algernon's company. There was a fire in his manner of looking at her, and a bold familiarity

in his mode of address, which discomposed her, and made her desire to shrink into herself, without being able to explain to her own breast the reason why she did so. While he was summoned to hear the story of his altered fortunes, she threw herself, exhausted by the variety of her emotions, into a chair near a window, that opened on a trellised alcove, which she had carefully entwined with every sweet climber that perfumes the garden, to breathe a welcome for him she loved. Bursting into an agony of tears, she looked upon her work and exclaimed:

"Flowers! you have lost your fragrance. The simple joys of nature are no longer here. They are become 'dim recollected feelings of the days of youth and early love.' Dreamer! thy doom is sealed! What has Zorilda in common with the world's attractions? Algernon is lost to me! Yes, these are not the looks of Algernon! Why do I turn abashed from the companion of my childhood?"

Zorilda's meditations were interrupted by a summons from Mr. Hartland, who informed her that he must leave Henbury early on the

following day, and desired to commit several matters of importance to her care during his absence. Dinner succeeded, and the evening was chiefly occupied in preparations of one kind or other for the ensuing journey; but notwithstanding the vigilance of Mrs. Hartland, and her constant endeavour to monopolize her son, he found opportunity from time to time, to say a few words in secret to Zorilda.

"Keep up your spirits, Zoé; you shall be Lady Hautonville one of these days! I am resolved upon it, so do not be frightened; but we have much to do, and you have much to learn. You must be *schooled* for the new order of society which you are about to enter. Nothing can be more unlike the world than your present style of manners, dress, appearance. *My* wife can never be such a country lassie as you are; but I will have you put in the right way. I know a charming person, La Baronne de Torsi, who will be happy to do me a kindness. She will have pleasure in forming you to the standard of good taste. The materials, my Zoé, are perfect, but you want the air, the

fashion, the indispensable tone of society, which you could not attain in this wretched place. What a pair are these poor old souls, my father and mother! They seem to have the year *one*, printed in large letters on every look, word, and gesture. We must bury them in the woods at Marchdale-court, while you and I figure away on the theatres of glorious France and Italy. I am sick of Old England's roast beef, and find nothing good or agreeable off the Continent. Good night, my lovely Zo; we will make all our arrangements on my return from this horrible funeral."

Algernon wished to seal these words, which were but jarring sounds to Zorilda's ear, by a kiss, but she turned, and hastily disengaging her hand from his, flew to the sanctuary of her chamber, there to reflect, through a sleepless night, upon the miseries of her destiny.

"La Baronne de Torsi! a stranger, a foreigner; *she* to form my mind, my manners, my tastes anew, to the frivolous and artificial? I will have no such monitress. Is this the language of true love? I know it not by these signs.

There is no prison, however dreary, no wilderness however wild, into which Zorilda would not accompany the being whom she loved, to suffer pain and privation, and if not permitted her to shield, yet still to share each pang, would be her bosom's joy; but thus scorned, thus disdained, it must not, cannot be."

Morning came, and found the poor mourner still a prey to the tortures of wounded sensibility. Mr. Hartland and his son were to set out so early, that she was spared the humiliation of shewing how much power Algernon possessed over her affections. As he went down stairs he knocked at Zorilda's door, and slipped a bit of paper underneath, on which were hastily written, with a pencil, the following words:

"In the tumult of yesterday's meeting, I forgot to warn you against receiving any communication, either by letter or visit, from *any one* till my return. *Addio, carissima, Algernon.*"

"Hah!" thought Zorilda, "Can this be the explanation? Is Algernon the unseen guardian who has been watching over me, and to whose friendly care I have been indebted for avoiding

danger, though I know not of what nature? But no: the letter which I received is not in his hand-writing, and the sentiments which it expresses, so full of delicate consideration for the unhappy Zorilda, are alas! little in unison with the language of yesterday evening, which still echoes through my heart. Nothing but mystery appears to surround me whichever way my eyes are directed."

On meeting Mrs. Hartland in the breakfast-parlour, Zorilda's looks too plainly bespoke the state of her mind to leave a doubt of what she endured. A few constrained questions and answers broke the rigid silence which would otherwise have marked this unsocial meeting.

Mrs. Hartland rang the bell, and ordering the tea things to be taken away, desired her young companion to wait her return; and quitting the room, left Zorilda in new perplexity at what was next to happen.

Mrs. Hartland re-appeared in a few minutes, bringing an ink-stand and paper in her hand. Shutting the door, and laying these upon a table, she ordered Zorilda, in a stern voice, to

sit down opposite to her, with which the latter having complied, she proceeded to unfold her object.

"It is no longer possible," said Mrs. Hartland, "to be silent. The time is come when it is necessary to explain my views, and come to an open understanding with you. Your attachment to my son cannot be mistaken, and I must tell you plainly, that it highly displeases Mr. Hartland and me. You should recollect our relative positions: *you*, an unknown orphan, discovered, accidentally, in a gipsey camp, without name, family, or pretensions; redeemed from the infamy of associating with a lawless horde by the charity which brought you here, are finely repaying the protectors of your childhood! Can you suppose, for a moment, that because you were permitted during infancy to be the companion of my son, and allowed, in after life to share the instructions which were bestowed on him by Mr. Playfair; can you, I repeat, imagine for a single instant that you were ever designed to be his wife? Do you think that a pretty face is sufficient qualification

for the future Countess of Marchdale, or that Lord Hautonville's parents would ever look upon him again, were the wiles of an artful girl to betray his honourable mind into a remembrance of the boyish vows which children make to each other before they comprehend the nature of a promise? There is only one act by which you can ease my mind, and restore yourself to that place in my regards from which, I confess with regret, that you have fallen. Here are paper, pen, and ink; I have never found you untrue, and shall depend with confidence upon your written assurance, regularly signed, for my *full* satisfaction, that from this moment, you not only renounce all pretension to an alliance with my family; but should a romantic spirit of chivalry induce Algernon to forget what he owes to himself, and his father and mother, by offering his hand to you, that you here pledge yourself solemnly to repel such proposals, and reject every advance on the part of one whose death would be preferable, in my eyes to a marriage inconsistent with his rank in society. I have now spoken without reserve. You know my

feelings, and if you are disposed to gratify me by the sacrifice which I require, there is nothing which I will leave undone to forward your interests. I will prevail on my son to settle something handsome upon you. I will write to my friends, and obtain some situation for you as soon as possible, in which your talents may secure your future independence; or it may be, that when you are seen and known out of this deep retirement, some suitable match may present itself, and ——"

Zorilda had resolved to hear out Mrs. Hartland's harangue in patient silence, and restrain every emotion which it might excite; but though she had prepared for want of kindness, she did not anticipate the coarseness by which she had just been assailed. Notwithstanding every effort, or rather, perhaps, because she exerted herself beyond her powers, her eyes grew dim, her head became giddy, and she fell back senseless in her chair.

When she revived from the state of insensibility into which she had been thrown by the indelicacy of Mrs. Hartland's proceedings, she

found herself alone with Rachel, whose tender assiduity restored her faculties once more. She had been removed to her apartment, and was laid on her bed, from which she now rose in haste, and, dismissing her faithful attendant with thanks, she summoned up all the resolution of her character, entered Mrs. Hartland's dressing-room, where she found that lady seated at her table, writing with perfect sang froid, and calmly addressed her:

"Madam," said Zorilda, in a gentle but unfaltering voice, "I come to give you an answer, which the accident of sudden indisposition has delayed. I thank you for your care of my infant years. I am grateful also for the asylum which I have since found under your roof. These acknowledgments are all that I have to bestow, and I confess that they are a poor remuneration for the favours which you have conferred upon a hapless stranger."

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Hartland, interrupting the lovely but unfortunate Zorilda, "you can make a return which will more than repay me. Certainly I *have been* every thing to

you, and I am glad that you appreciate as you ought to do that kindness which snatched you from perils worse than death, and has cherished you ever since in the enjoyment of every comfort. You have sense enough to be conscious that you have not been a costless charge; but I only mention your *entire* destitution, your dependence for every morsel of bread, every article of clothing, protection, tenderness, education, companionship, only, I say, to show how *greatly* I shall estimate the act by which you, who are aware of the extent of your obligations, are enabled at one stroke of your pen to cancel them all. Here, my love, I have drawn up the *promissory note*, as I may call it, which wipes off all scores between us. Here, my dear, though you have no sirname, nor for the matter of *that*, perhaps, Christian either, for you may have been born amongst the Turks or the Jews, and never baptized at all, for any thing that we can tell to the contrary; sign the three syllables, Zorilda, whether given to you at the font or in the gipsey's camp, it is all the same to me. Write your

name in a fair hand, opposite to this seal; declare it to be your act and deed; I will call Rachel to witness the transaction, and our business is done; I demand no legal forms, as my confidence in your truth——"

"Must be your only guarantee, Madam," replied Zorilda. "I will not sign any document to resign possessions to which I lay no claim. Whatever kindness may be manifested towards me during my pilgrimage on earth, must be freely given and as freely received; but you need not dread me; I will not requite ungratefully the obligations which I owe. If you really confide in my truth, prove it by relying on what I say; and as to my future fate, discharge your mind, I pray you, of all anxiety upon that account. Grant me but a short time to make some trifling arrangements for my departure, and you shall be satisfied in all things. I can never be too thankful for the instructions which you permitted me to derive from that much valued friend, Mr. Playfair, and upon these I shall depend for being no longer a tax upon your bounty. The God in whom I trust,

will hear the orphan's prayer, and bless my humble exertions."

"Then, Madam," answered Mrs. Hartland, "am I to understand, that you refuse to sign the paper which I hold in my hand?"

"It is most reluctantly that I refuse to comply with any requisition of yours," said Zorilda; "but I am determined not to sign that paper. Possessing no rights, making no demand, I will not assume the merit of renouncing that to which I do not assert a title. Were I bound by an engagement such as terrifies you to anticipate, I should be unworthy of the choice, undeserving of the affection with which I could basely trifle, and of which I could thus make a cruel, cold, and heartless surrender ——"

"Quit my presence this instant, artful and unnatural girl," retorted Mrs. Hartland: "If you are resolved not to comply with my reasonable desire, I am equally so, that you shall not reap any harvest from your obstinacy and disobedience. Quit me, I say, this moment, and do not presume to leave your apartment. I give you one week to consider of your conduct; if at

the end of that time you repent of your behaviour to me, and declare yourself ready to submit, all shall be forgotten; but if you persevere in your present shameful resistance to my will and pleasure, prepare to depart. I shall take measures in the interim for your removal, and shall not consult your convenience as to the time or manner of it."

Zorilda withdrew, and having gained her prison-chamber, laid her aching head upon the pillow, revolving in her mind this crisis of her present circumstances. The cup of sorrow seemed now filled to the brim; one drop more, and it would overflow; and death, the last friend of despair, would come, she thought, to her aid, and terminate her trials. It was not the rigorous treatment which she had just experienced—it was not confinement—that she deplored; on the contrary, solitude and repose were as soothing as they were become necessary to her harassed spirits; but the gentle, the affectionate Zorilda, had never till now rebelled against the authority of her whom she still reflected on as her benefactress; and she reproached herself with

having inflicted pain. Unaccustomed to resist, she wondered how she could have denied a request of Mrs. Hartland's. Yet to yield was as repugnant to every sentiment of love and delicacy as to every principle of truth and honour. Here, then, was the final dissolution of all her airy dreams. Here was the extinguishment of hope, the end of wishes, the last blow to expectation.

"How merciful the 'blindness kindly given' which prevents us penetrating the dark veil of future events!" exclaimed the meek sufferer; "but the time is come. How little did I imagine it so close at hand when the friendship of my beloved Mrs. Gordon is to be tried! *Her* friendship will not fail me in the hour of need!"

Zorilda was at a loss whether or not to apprise the family at Drumcairn of her intentions by a letter which should precede her arrival in Scotland, but after a short consideration determind against doing so. Her departure, she felt, had become too necessary to leave any option, and it was better not to hazard the possibility of Mrs. Gordon's recommending her to

postpone so adventurous an undertaking. Besides, if her elopement were to excite a desire in those she left behind to trace her retreat, inquiry would naturally be directed, in the first instance, to the only quarter from which it might be supposed that authentic information respecting her movements and designs might be obtained. She therefore resolved on prosecuting her journey without giving Mrs. Gordon any reason to expect her, certain as she felt of the welcome that awaited her coming at all times in the breast of that true friend.

Those only whose hearts are capable of such attachment as dwelt within Zorilda's bosom can form any idea of the overwhelming grief with which she contemplated bidding farewell to the scenes of her childhood, and with them to every object round which her strong, but tender affection, had entwined itself from earliest infancy; yet as misfortune had begun to teach her the happy art which can draw good from apparent evil, as the bee extracts honey from the vilest weeds, she felt glad that the prohibition which forbade her usual exercise preserved her

from the pain of dwelling in detail on every leaf and flower associated with fondest memory. "Mrs. Hartland's decree is a kind one," said she. "I shall break my bonds at once, and not weaken resolution by re-visiting those objects, which to gaze upon again would but enfeeble its powers. Algernon—once beloved—oh *still* beloved, must I tear *you* from this heart? *There* is the sting; but the sacrifice shall be finished."

Some days elapsed; Zorilda made an effort to occupy herself in preparation for her intended flight. Rachel's watchful care ministered all the consolation which kindness could impart, and through her activity and address, the manner of the journey was planned with so much circumspection, that nothing further remained to impede its commencement. The approaching alterations in the establishment at Henbury afforded Rachel an opportunity of disengaging herself from further services as a domestic without exciting suspicion respecting her future intentions; and having given notice to Mrs. Hartland that she meant to leave her, she deter-

mined on accompanying Zorilda wherever her fortunes might lead the way. At the end of a week, just as the time was drawing near when some account might be expected from Marchdale-court, Rachel, gliding softly into Zorilda's apartment with a packet in her hand,

"This is for you, my dear young lady; but it is not the letter which you were hoping for from the North."

Zorilda started, and remembering the caution which she had received from Algernon at parting, concluded this to be the communication against which he had warned her in the slip of paper which he thrust under her door just before he left Henbury. She seized the packet with tremulous eagerness. It was of large dimensions, and contained some hard substance. Whence could it come? what could it be? were questions which might well interest a girl of eighteen. Perhaps, if truth were told, there are few of either sex or any age exempt from such a measure of curiosity as would tempt to break the seal in such a case; but in Zorilda's circum-

stances every trifle was raised into importance; even the parcel which she held in her hand might elucidate her history and influence her fate. Yet Algernon had bid her beware of receiving any thing of this nature. He therefore knew whence it came, and if advantageous to her, would he have advised her to return it unopened? Certainly not, and he should find, that however he might conduct himself in the end towards her, she would not begin by doubting either his truth or kindness. After a moment's pause, she gave back the packet to Rachel, who stood gaping with expectation, and longing for the unfolding of its contents.

"Here, Rachel, I am afraid to open this. I know nothing of it, and think that there is some mistake. It may be a parcel of Mrs. Hartland's; it cannot be for me; at least I will inquire who sent it, before I take off the packing."

"Lord ha' mercy, my dear child," answered Rachel, "did I not tell you that it comes from your old and fast friend Mr. Playfair? I'm sure if I did not, it was the joy I felt in bringing it to you, that made me neglect to

name him. I thought you would know all about it the minute you set your two eyes upon the cover, and wondered to see you so slow in coming at the inside."

"Thank heaven!" ejaculated Zorilda. "Here is assistance in the hour of need. Here at least is sympathy, when my dejected spirit is cast down."

Tearing off the wrapping paper with eagerness, she found a letter, directed to "My dear Pupil," in the well known hand of her tutor, accompanied by a large packet without any address.

"This will explain the other," said Zorilda, "and comes, I know, from one in whom I may confide. I will read his letter first. Now, dear Rachel, leave me, and if I have any good news to communicate you may be sure of hearing it. You are the only being here who will care to listen to aught that affects me, and you shall not be kept long in ignorance."

Rachel quitted the room while Zorilda unfolded the letter, and to her astonishment read as follows:

"I have, my dear child, always endeavoured to impress upon your young heart a *practical* belief in the God who watches over His people. Your quick sensibility has been more inclined to murmuring than thankfulness, and the apparent hardness of that dispensation which left you like a fallen star, dropped from the clouds upon earth without home or parents or worldly provision of any kind, seemed to furnish excuse for the tardiness of your submission; but, inasmuch as you have felt inclined to doubt the care of an Almighty ruler, as relating to yourself, in such proportion will you now assuredly pour out the incense of gratitude and wonder, when you hear the tale which I have to unfold, and ponder on those remarkable coincidences which render me the medium of an accompanying packet, which I have taken means to convey by a safe hand through which it will find its way to yours, without the knowledge of any one at Henbury except the faithful Rachel. May this interesting document, which I now send you, prove the forerunner of future good, and may you expe-

rience as much satisfaction in receiving as I feel in imparting it!

"I am yet to tell you how this packet most unexpectedly fell into the possession of your old and affectionate friend. On my way to Paris I lingered at Abbeville, with intention of revisiting those haunts endeared to memory by our favourite Petrarch. While staying at the inn a message was brought to me, saying that a dying gentleman, who lived at no great distance, was desirous to speak with me, and requested my immediate attention to his request. At a loss to account for such an invitation, yet fearful of giving pain to a fellow-creature in extremity, if I waited to make further inquiry, I followed a servant who led the way, and in a few minutes was introduced to the bedside of Colonel Dalton. He had a manly and noble countenance, but appeared in the last stage of decline. Fixing his fine expressive eyes, which were lighted by that meteor gleam which burns brightest on the confines of the tomb, upon my face, as if to read my character there—he extended his emaciated hand, and said, with a feeble voice,

" 'I thank you Sir. This is an act of kindness which will relieve my mind, and soothe the last moments of a departing spirit. Since I have been sensible that my hour is at hand, and that I shall never leave this place, the packet which I am now going to give into your care, has been subject of deep solicitude to me. I lately sent a faithful servant, on whose integrity I could have relied for its safe delivery—to prepare my sister, who lives in Sussex, for my arrival—but Heaven has ordered otherwise. I reached Abbeville a few days ago, attended only by my groom, whom I have not known long enough to depend upon. This packet contains some property of value, and a narrative which I drew up years ago. These are of the deepest interest to a young and lovely Spaniard who resides somewhere in England, with a family of the name of Hartland. The only name I know for her is Zorilda, but I do not mean to trouble you with seeking her out. Convey this, together with a box which I shall commit to your keeping, to my sister, Lady Carleton, whose address I will give you. She will do the rest, if you

explain my wishes now expressed to you. You will greatly oblige me by this act of benevolence. Strength fails me. Your countenance inspires belief that you will fulfil the sacred trust which I repose in you. I am a soldier, and honour is the soldier's bond.'

"He grew faint. I gave him some reviving drops, which were at hand, and, after promising to execute his commission with my best zeal, proceeded at intervals, as he could listen to the recital, to inform him of the extraordinary providence which had thrown in his way the very person of all others most suited to his purpose. He was much struck with the detail which I gave him, and during three succeeding days entirely devoted to him, I had the satisfaction of holding such conversation, as, with the blessing of Heaven upon its motive, I have good reason to believe deprived death of its sting. I took charge of his will, and other papers of value, for his family. He expired without a struggle, and having stayed to attend his mortal remains to the tomb, I travelled back to perform my vow. Having seen Lady Carleton, I have discharged

my mission as far as regards her; but send your parcel, of which I made no mention to her ladyship, by a sure conveyance to your own hands. On my return to England (for I am once more setting out for the Continent) I hope to see you. Having now fortified your mind, I trust, by the proof which I send you of your Heavenly Father's care, I feel it my duty to put that faith and confidence, which such assurance ought to inspire, to a severe test, by communicating intelligence of another kind; but I should not be your true friend were I to suppress what has come to my knowledge; and through a cowardly dread of inflicting a present pang, incur the danger of contributing, by my silence, to your far greater suffering at a future day.

"I am too well acquainted, my dear Zorilda, with the human heart, and the signs by which its feelings are naturally expressed, to be ignorant of the attachment which sprang up under my own observation between Algernon and you. I beheld its rise and progress, and lamented what I was unable to prevent. I knew the dissimilarity of your characters, and the difference

of those motives by which you were severally actuated. Algernon, selfish and domineering from his birth, regarded no object except inasmuch as it increased the sum of his own gratification. You were ever generous, affectionate, and disinterested. Such disparity I was well aware could never produce a happy union; but I had no means of averting the perils which I foresaw. Events have confirmed my presages, and Algernon's career since he left home has been marked by an utter dereliction of every principle with which I vainly sought to imbue his mind. It is with grief I inform you that his extravagance and dissipation have arrived at a fearful height, and the last account which I have heard of him, is the worst. Overwhelmed with debt, for the payment of which his future prospects are pledged beyond, it is said, what the estates of Marchdale, if bequeathed to him, can liquidate, burthened as they are already; he has supplied present necessities by borrowing at usurious interest, till, on the failure of even this ruinous resource, he has condescended to receive pecuniary assistance from an opera singer, to

whom many people believe that he is married, and in whose company he is gone to England.

"Whatever be the nature of the tie which binds Algernon to such society, it is your part, my child, to wean your affections from a man who is unworthy of them. The effort will be painful, but it is necessary to your peace.

"Farewell, my dear young friend, may you be sustained through every trial of life, by the divine protection," &c. &c. &c.

Zorilda's emotions as she concluded Mr. Playfair's letter, may be imagined but cannot be described. Surprise, curiosity, grief, and indignation took alternate possession of her mind. The packet accompanying the letter was still unopened. What mysterious interference of Providence in her behalf could it contain, and coming too from a stranger's hand, that should call forth her gratitude to God? She broke the seals and found an agate box with a roll of paper inscribed,

"A TRUE NARRATIVE."

Laying the former aside, she read as follows:

CHAPTER X.

This is indeed a tiding!"
That fellow is a precious casket to us
Enclosing weighty things." WALLENSTEIN.

"ON a fine evening of autumn, I arrived at Grenada. Fatigued after a toilsome journey, I determined to halt for the night in this ancient city, and strolling into one of its magnificent churches, from which the congregation had just issued, I wandered up and down the spacious aisles, indulging in silent solitude my admiration for the grand obscure of their noble architecture.

"As I moved slowly forward, musing on a scene which peculiarly harmonised with my love for the sublime, a female figure, habited like a nun, and whose features were studiously concealed by a long veil, glided swiftly from behind one

of the enormous pillars which supported the building, laid her hand hastily upon my arm, and in a low tone, addressed the following words to me in the Spanish language:

"'I have marked your countenance; it bespeaks intrepidity and benevolence; if you possess these qualities, meet me to-night precisely at twelve o'clock without fail, at the western gate of the ancient palace of the Moors.'

"The vision vanished, but the solemnity of voice and manner in which these words were pronounced, convinced me that the adventure had something extraordinary in its nature. It might be a case of imprisonment or distress. Conjecture was vain, but there was an earnestness in the nun's manner which was irresistible. I resolved on going armed, and taking a friend along with me to guard against a surprise. Exactly at the appointed hour I reached the western inlet to that once splendid residence, now superb vestige of former days, which had been named as the place of rendezvous. At the moment of my arrival, the same veiled figure whom I had seen in the church, appeared with

a small lamp in her hand. Looking fearfully around, she inquired whether I was alone. I answered in the affirmative, having left my companion at a sufficient distance to prevent our being overheard.

"'Then,' said my conductress, 'fear nothing; and follow me, if you are prepared to undertake a commission which requires secrecy and kindness to execute it efficiently.'

"I hesitated, and drew back; but instantly perceiving the doubt which crossed my mind, the Nun added, with eagerness, 'Fear not; I will detain you but a few minutes. The only trial to which your courage will be exposed is surmounted in the moment of your entrance here. You suspect my truth, and the dark labyrinth through which I am going to lead the way, may well appal a stranger; but *trust* me, and I will not deceive you.'

"Ashamed to express any further unwillingness, and impressed by the mild dignity of her manner, I suffered myself to be drawn inside a small door which led down a flight of narrow stone stairs to a long winding subterranean pas-

sage. My guide went swiftly forward, encouraging me to follow. We made many turnings, and passed several doors on the right and left, which seemed to lead to other passages; but all was still and silent as the grave, except when the large heavy drops, that lined the vaulted roofs, fell to the ground with loud and sullen splash. My sword was slight defence, if ambush lurked within these walls; but it was too late to recede. The faint cry of an infant at length struck upon my ear, and sent a sudden thrill through my frame.

"'Hush, beloved babe!' said my companion, as she pushed back a bolt, and we entered a small vaulted chamber, at the extremity of which a little silver lamp streamed its feeble rays upon a spectacle of woe—the lifeless corpse of a young and exquisitely beautiful woman, who seemed but that moment to have breathed her last, lay extended on the ground; from the chill damps of which, her delicate limbs appeared to have been only protected by a pallet of straw, over which was thrown, by way of coverlet, a rich mantle of scarlet cloth lined with ermine. The

Nun, raising this splendid pall, discovered to my view a new-born infant within its folds. The little creature had just awakened from sleep; and my conductress taking the mantle from the dead body, wrapped it carefully round the child, which, after pressing affectionately to her bosom, she delivered into my arms. Then arranging the garments of the deceased, which resembled her own costume, with pious care, next placing an ebony cross, or *prie Dieu*, on the breast, and winding a string of beads round the alabaster arms, which she folded across the bosom, the friendly Nun threw back her veil, and with a heavenly expression of devotional tenderness, knelt down at the side of the corpse, and with uplifted hands and eyes, briefly, but fervently, implored a blessing on the departed spirit, committing that which had but just left its earthly tabernacle to the Eternal Guardian of souls. Then printing a fond kiss on the cold lips which were unconscious of the tender farewell, she seized a packet which lay near the head of the dead lady, and disposing it within her cloak, snatched up the lamp which had guided

our steps to this abode of death, leaving the other to become fainter and fainter, and then expire over the dead. She pointed towards the door, which having passed, she bolted, and we again pursued our way through the same passages by which we entered the vaults, till, turning short by the foot of a staircase which I had not seen before, she led me to a different portal from that at which I met her: stopping there before she proceeded to unlock the outside door, and uncovering her face, she desired me to attend to her instructions. She appeared about five and thirty, of a fine figure, and her countenance was remarkable for its expression of serenity and sweetness.

"'Preserve this precious infant,' said she, 'with fidelity and affection. Take her to your own country; and in this packet, which I consign to your honourable trust, you will find resources for giving her the best education. Her father is an English nobleman, her mother was lovely and virtuous, but deceived. She left the convent in which I dwell to join her husband; but a fictitious marriage, which she be-

lieved to have been performed according to the most sacred rites of your Church, left him who had basely practised on her confidence free to desert his victim, who died of grief after giving birth to this dear babe. She resumed her Nun's habit ere she laid her down in death; and made me vow to send her daughter to England, but not to the guardianship of her father. You will not disappoint my hopes; I feel assured that you will watch this little treasure with fostering kindness. Adieu! May the God of the orphan be with you! Depart in peace!'

"So saying, she waved her hand; and giving me no time for more than a sincere but hasty promise, urged me gently forward, and closing the entrance, she retraced her steps, returning into the building, while I proceeded to grope along at random in quest of my friend, who suffered the greatest anxiety, fearing that I had fallen a prey to my imprudence and foolish thirst for romance. Apprehensive of my fate, he continued wandering round and round the Moorish palace, seeking me in every direction. We met at length. I related my adventure,

and shall procure the signature of my friend to this account of it, that she to whom it is most interesting may hereafter find the best proof which I can give her of its accuracy.

"It was but a slight deviation from the truth to proclaim, on my return to quarters, that I had found the infant. Having procured an excellent nurse, I placed my little charge in her care. The child grew in strength and beauty, and became as dear to me as if it had been my own. My duty obliged me frequently to change place and encounter peril, which, to spare my young ward, I settled her and her nurse in a delightful and wholesome situation in the province of Castille, resolving not to disturb them till I could convey the child to an English school. During my absence the nurse died. I was not informed of the event. Zorilda fell into the hands of an unprincipled wretch, the wife of a soldier, who immediately perceived that she could turn her theft to lucrative profit. This woman carefully concealed the child, wandering from place to place to elude pursuit, and at length, having

crossed the sea with her booty, disposed of the little girl to a band of gipsies.

"It was a long time before I gained any intelligence respecting Zorilda's fate, and when at last my mind was relieved from its solicitude, I was far away in India, and it appeared to me that I could do nothing better for my young charge, than leave her quietly in the safe asylum which the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Hartland had provided for her. My appearing to prefer my claim could not, I thought, benefit the condition of Zorilda. I was neither enabled to clear up the mystery of her birth, nor offer any clue to the discovery of her father. Interference on my part might lessen the interest conceived towards her by those benefactors who imagined their rights to be undisputed, while her noble parent, whoever he might be, coming to the knowledge of circumstances which were not intended to be divulged, and perhaps alarmed in consequence for his own reputation, might employ some artful means to obtain possession of his daughter. This reasoning satisfied

me that the wisest plan was to lie by, and make no stir in the matter; but suffering things for the present to take their course, wait patiently till the full age, or marriage of Zorilda, should furnish occasion for the final relinquishment of my guardianship.

"The sum originally deposited with me by the Nun has increased to five thousand pounds British, for which amount, a check upon my banker in London will be found sealed up in a packet containing a diamond cross, a bracelet of hair, and a miniature portrait.

"I had presumed to hope that I might one day deliver these articles of value with my own hands to their interesting possessor, and taste the pleasure of recalling to her remembrance the welcome with which she used to receive me at her nurse Rueda's house, when I went laden with fruit and flowers to visit my charming little play-fellow. Providence has ordained it otherwise, and death arrests my progress.

"The mantle of scarlet cloth, lined with ermine, which I wished to preserve and restore with the rest, was stolen from me. I commit all

that remains to the care of Mr. Playfair, that excellent, may I venture to call him, friend, to whose goodness I am deeply indebted——"

The concluding lines of this memoir were scarcely legible, and traced with a pencil in characters so unlike the writing which preceded, as to prove that an effort of expiring strength had added them by way of supplement to the narrative. A certificate was appended to it, sealed and signed with the name of Charles Russell, who confirmed the statement which it set forth; and Zorilda having with breathless impatience devoured the entire, fell upon her knees, to adore that Power which thus signally interposed to sustain her in the darkest hour of adversity.

After a passionate thanksgiving offered with instinctive glow from her inmost soul, the cruel thought of Algernon returned with all its force. Oh ! had these tidings arrived to crown his virtuous, constant love, how blest had been Zorilda ! But, like a lamp suddenly introduced into the depths of a dungeon, the light which had just fallen on her history only seemed to mark more clearly the desolation of her lot. She read

Mr. Playfair's letter again and again, and returned as often to the narrative of Colonel Dalton, so absorbed in anxious scrutiny of their contents, that for a long time she totally forgot another inclosure which still remained unexamined.

Catching it hastily, with the eagerness of one desirous to repair an ungrateful omission by increased activity, she unfolded the other parcel, and opening a box of transparent agate, drew forth a splendid Maltese cross of the richest brilliants, then a miniature, and lastly, a bracelet of the finest soft dark hair, to which was fastened a ticket, addressed "To MY BELOVED ZORILDA, FROM HER MOTHER."

The word *Mother*, that magic word, containing within itself all that the human heart intuitively acknowledges of tender and protective, struck at this moment on Zorilda's heart with all the power of nature and novelty, while her emotions almost seemed to threaten existence.

"Oh, my mother, my adored mother! must I lose and find you in the same instant of time?

Zorilda's arms would grow around that neck, and shield that heavenly bosom from every grief, but she is dead! cold and dead! This beaming eye is sealed, the soft glow of this beautiful cheek has faded, this angelic smile no longer plays upon these coral lips which it has deserted, and for ever!"

So raved Zorilda, as she pressed to her bosom the miniature of her mother, and gazed, in an agony of grief, on the portrait of her whose presence, could it be restored to her fond embrace, would now, she thought, fill every void in her heart, and leave no room for any other love.

When the feelings are strained to their utmost, the mind falls into calm, as the raging billows of the ocean subside into repose after a storm of elemental strife, while resignation sits above, and watches the moment to whisper peace. Zorilda became gradually more composed, and the torturing sense of her own loss began to yield to less selfish considerations.

"This lovely being," said she aloud, "was unhappy; she is now inhabiting the mansions of

eternal rest. Here, in this cold and cruel world, contumely and reproach might have pierced her soul; in Heaven are no tears. *There*, in celestial communion with kindred spirits of the just made perfect, clothed in white robes, and crowned with imperishable glory, amongst the highly favoured, who have drank at the bitter waters of affliction, and risen purified by tribulation, my blessed mother stands before the throne, joining her voice in the melodious concert of everlasting hallelujahs: and shall I wish her back again in this scene of sorrow? No! But Heaven will hear my prayer, and take me to her. That is all my desire, all for which my longing soul now pants."

"Lord love my dear Miss Zoé, what fine things are here!" exclaimed Rachel, who at this moment entered the room with some refreshment which she set down on a tray before Zorilda. The latter started from her seat, and threw her arms round the neck of this affectionate creature; then, pointing to the papers, told her, that they contained much interesting

matter which should be explained at some future time when she felt more equal to the task.

"Heaven be praised," said Rachel, "that you have good news from any quarter to comfort you, for you have little to spare, and there will be even less than we enjoy already, if I do not mistake, as my lady is desperately chop-fallen, by reason of news which she has received through this day's post; and you and I can both tell how her temper is likely to be affected. Master writes her word, that he and Mr. Algernon (Lord Hautonville, I should say,) are to be here the latter end of next week, and there is a terrible falling off by what I can learn, in the *property* part of the story. It seems that my Lord Marchdale had power to will away all the estates except one, which must go with the title; and sure enough he did not leave Master a rap that he could keep from him. All the bulk of his fortune is gone, they say, to a set of people who have for a long time been eating him out of house and home; and I hear, moreover, that what is left to the present lord is not

enough to keep up any state or style suitable for a nobleman. Indeed I wish that we were well out of this before the meeting of the family again, for I am full certain, that we shall find ourselves in troubled waters."

Zorilda appeared lost in reverie during the greater part of Rachel's harangue; but, suddenly awakened by its cessation, she answered,

"Yes, dear nurse, it is time to be gone. I will not wait the return of Lord Marchdale, but I have neither head nor heart to make any preparation for departure. On your skill and management I rest for so ordering matters, that the strictest secresy shall attend upon our movements. I have the means of re-paying any money necessary for our journey, but you must contrive to borrow for the present. I have much to say, but am exhausted, and cannot talk to you more till to-morrow."

"Do not fatigue yourself, my child," replied Rachel. "Blessed and praised for all things be that Providence which brings round the most wonderful changes in its own good time. I had so many dreams about you, and my sleep of late

was so uneasy, that it was foreshewn to me how you would come to riches and honour, and find out all about your birth and parentage, and learn who you are, and——"

"Oh! stop, Rachel, stop, no more of this;" said Zorilda, whose memory was touched upon a sensitive chord by these allusions to a part of her history, which remained as much as ever wrapped in clouds. "Go," added she, "and think how we shall get away in such a manner that we may avoid the possibility of being traced. My mind is so agitated and confused, that you must give me time to recover. Moments are precious. Go, dear Rachel; lose no time; but consider how we shall leave this without suspicion. No one must be involved in any difficulty or hazard on my account, and therefore our purpose must be secret as well as its execution."

"I will do every thing you desire," answered Rachel; "and moreover the whole plan is already in my head. Every body knows that I was going myself, and therefore no questions will be asked about my trunks, in which there is

room for your clothes as well as mine. My brother lives near, and will lend me whatever I want. All is smooth as a bowling-green, since you know who you are, and where you are going."

So saying, Rachel quitted the room, and her young mistress was left to collect her scattered senses. "Her last words strike upon my heart. Alas! I know as little as ever, and 'Who is she?' remains unanswered," sighed poor Zorilda, who had now leisure to reflect, and perceive that the discovery which she had made was one that left her in all her original ignorance. "But," added she, as she still mused on this strange event, "it no longer avails, that I have neither name, nor house, nor pretensions. More knowledge than I possess, what would it do for me? Would it not only lead to hatred of a father who could act so wickedly as mine has done? Why should I wish to know the man who was in fact the murderer of this angelic being? It is better as it is. Oh! if all our vain wishes were heard, what wretchedness should we add to our afflictions! The councils

of heaven are wiser than those of earth. We know not what we ask."

Rachel returned after some interval of time, elated with her contrivance, in which Zorilda could find nothing to improve. It was arranged, that as soon as possible Rachel was to ask for her dismissal, which Mrs. Hartland was prepared to give her. Her wages were paid, and the removal of her luggage appeared a matter of course.

"We will leave the house so early in the morning," said Rachel, "that there will be no witnesses of our departure. I will tell Mary not to mind going till late into your room, and not to take notice of your absence from it, as you must walk for your health, and cannot submit to such close imprisonment as that to which you are condemned. The servants will all be glad to think that you are taking the air. Mistress will ask no questions, for she cares little about you, and her mind is taken up with her own affairs. I have already borrowed a covered cart of my brother's, who will meet us at a little distance from his house. You shall throw a large cloak

of mine over your dress, which will disguise you completely. Even the man who drives us shall not know that you are with me, and we will leave our vehicle before we arrive at the next village; so that there will be no clue whatsoever to our retreat. Let me manage every thing, and it shall be well done, I promise you. Where are you going?"

"I am going to Scotland," answered Zorilda. "I leave all to your sagacity. Take me to my dear Mrs. Gordon in Aberdeenshire, and I ask no more. I will consult the map, and tell you the route by which we are to travel. Let your care only be to guard against discovery and pursuit."

"Mrs. Hartland will not give herself any trouble about you, but will be very glad to hear that you are out of her way; and as to the gentlemen, who might not indeed take the matter so easily, they will not be here till we are many a mile away from Henbury," answered Rachel. "I am now going to send off my trunks, with a line, to my brother, to let him know that I must go directly after one who owes

me some money. He is aware that I am frightened about this debt, and will have his cart ready for me at the orchard-gate, where I have appointed it to attend me, a quarter of a mile beyond his own house at five o'clock to-morrow morning. I am come now to take the last of your things: every article except these books is put up."

"I will leave these books behind," said Zorilda, bursting into tears; "and this packet—this precious packet, shall never be separated from me for an instant. I will take charge of it myself."

Rachel hastened to finish her preparations, and Zorilda, once more left alone, gathered together a few volumes and some trifling ornaments, which had been given her from time to time by Algernon, and after gazing upon, and kissing fondly each memorial of early affection, which brought distant circumstances and tender recollections to her mind, she sealed up a parcel, containing all the little gifts which she had ever received, and felt as if she had now closed the grave over the last dear remains of blighted

love and murdered hope. Her next act was to write the following note, addressed to Mrs. Hartland:

"There was a time when Zorilda believed herself an object of affectionate interest in the breast of that kind benefactress who first offered an asylum to the destitute being, now going to requite a deed of charity by one of gratitude. That time, alas! is past, and with it all Zorilda's earthly happiness. Circumstances have occurred which render decision necessary, and these few lines are only left to say, that they are accompanied by a parcel, and the most earnest prayers for every good, from the heart of her who now leaves Henbury for ever, and bids Lady Marchdale a last adieu."

All being now ready, Zorilda lay down to rest, but not to sleep. "Fast coming thoughts" troubled repose, and busy memory would not be still. Weary of her uneasy couch, she rose before day, and lo ed from her window by the clear starlight, on that scene to which in a little hour she was to bid an eternal farewell.

"Beloved spot! I leave you, and for ever—

yes, for ever! Nor time nor change can alter my resolves. Algernon is dead to me, and my heart shall prove a faithful widow to its first, its only love. These stars shall witness my vows; these shrubs and flowers form the altar on which they are dedicated."

As Zorilda meditated on the landscape, the eastern clouds began to glow, and the birds awaked to the first beam of morning. Rachel's approach interrupted the mournful soliloquy of her young mistress, who was soon dressed, and, wrapping Rachel's large cloak around her, they both quitted the apartment, and with light step passed down stairs, through hall and passages unseen, and gained the pleasure-grounds without any obstacle to their progress. Zorilda made a sudden stop as she reached the arbour, which she had wreathed with fragrant climbers to meet Algernon's return. The sweet breath of new-born day wafted the perfume towards her, and she clasped her hands in anguish. Rachel's presence repressed utterance; but here was the bower, she thought, in which her delighted ear should listen to the tales of foreign

travel, and hear once more the accents of unchanging affection.

"Come, my dear," said Rachel, taking Zorilda by the arm, and gently urging her forward, "you must not make yourself melancholy by lingering here. If we are to go, we should not stand shilly shally. Remember that you wish to avoid discovery, and the only way to secure privacy is to use despatch."

Zorilda suffered herself to be driven on, and was presently in the open fields, not daring to look round upon the home of her happy childhood.

As they advanced towards the orchard, near which they were to be met by Farmer Wilson's cart, Rachel spied this rude equipage at a distance, and concealing Zorilda behind some bushes, while she spoke to the driver, and saw that her luggage was safely stowed within, she beckoned our trembling heroine, and having contrived to place her in the vehicle, stepped in herself, and ordered the lad to proceed in the direction which she described to him. Zorilda observed a mournful silence, which her com-

panion, though not given to taciturnity, had no inclination to disturb, her own mind being so intent on the practical concern of executing her present task with ability, that she was not sorry for the leisure to ponder her schemes, which Zorilda's deep depression of spirits afforded her.

At the distance of nearly ten miles from Henbury, our travellers approached the carrier's station, at which it was Rachel's design to stop, but to avoid being seen in company with her young mistress, she had the address to desire her charioteer to alight, and make inquiry in a cottage by the way-side, whether Mrs. Nixon, an imaginary friend of hers was to be found in the neighbourhood. While Tom made this inquiry, Rachel watched her opportunity, and opening the door at the back of the cart, made Zorilda descend, and walk forward towards the public-house, which was near at hand.

This was so dexterously managed, that when the carter returned with his answer, that no such person as Mr. Nixon was known, Rachel sat in solitary possession of the lowly convey-

ance which all along the road had been shared by another.

Arrived at the end of her appointed stage, she had the good luck to find a caravan just ready to start from the door. Zorilda had directions from her duenna to sit by the road side, under a spreading tree, till this new vehicle was in motion, while Rachel bustled about, appeared busy in recognising her acquaintances at the inn, and was attended to her carriage by the landlord and his wife, who wished her a pleasant journey, as she drove away from the porch at which they performed the parting honours.

Bidding adieu to the group who always assemble on such occasions to witness a departure, Rachel set off, and a sudden turn in the road, bore the caravan, though not moving at a very brisk rate, out of sight in a moment.

Zorilda was seated under the appointed tree, at a little distance, but so completely absorbed in her own thoughts, that she would have suffered the machine to pass unnoticed, if Rachel had not vociferated, 'Driver, driver; don't you

hear that gentlewoman calling to you; wont you stop for a passenger?'

The caravan stood still; Zorilda was roused from her melancholy reverie, and appearing with her little basket on her arm, Rachel shuffled from side to side with officious civility, assuring the stranger that there was "plenty of room," and so there was, for though like a snowball, they were destined to gather as they rolled, there were but two other persons already occupying seats, and these were a brace of sturdy farmers, who were so intent on comparing samples of corn, which each drew from his pocket, that Rachel had full opportunity to inform her fellow traveller, whose courage seemed to flag, that all farther devices to cover her flight would be unnecessary in a few hours.

"If they come in search of us, it will be first to my brother's; then to the inn which we have just quitted, and where, likewise, they will be foiled. After this stage, we may take our ease, and travel in a proper manner, like Christians. A little caution for one or two stages more, and we shall then be at liberty."

Zorilda sighed assent, and we will leave her and her attendant to their repose in a quiet country inn, while we return to Henbury.

Some hours elapsed before it was perceived that the fugitives were actually missing. Mrs. Hartland, or, as we must not forget henceforward to entitle her, Lady Marchdale, heard the intelligence with perfect sang froid, only remarking that it was very extraordinary that her orders should be disobeyed, and desiring that on Zorilda's return to her chamber, she should be informed of the circumstance. The servants had no more suspicion than their Lady of a longer absence than till evening, and fully believed that Rachel, fearful lest want of customary exercise might injure "Miss Zoé's health," had prevailed on her to make a short excursion for change of air.

Evening came on, however, and no sign of return. The parcel, with Zorilda's note, which had escaped observation, was now brought to Lady Marchdale, who was much surprised, but though she summoned all the household, she could learn no tidings whatsoever of the tra-

vellers. Curiosity was in fact the only motive for her inquiries, as the event of Zorilda's voluntary flight gave her inexpressible delight. All care and responsibility were now at an end. She had taken her affairs into her own hands, and Lady Marchdale not only felt relieved from all anxiety how to dispose of her, but might expatiate on the various surmises which she chose to indulge, so unfavourable to female modesty, youthful timidity, natural affection, gratitude, and the like, as to strengthen her arguments upon the impropriety of Lord Hautonville's wasting another thought upon such a graceless adventurer. "And Rachel too; no doubt *she* is in the secret. A pretty piece of work, truly, but they are gone upon their own inventions, which I am afraid are not of the best, and so I can do no more than leave them to their fate."

The old butler, to whom these words were principally addressed, shook his head, and replied: "My lady, I could bear any thing but to hear Miss Zoé suspected of evil doings. She is an angel on earth, wherever she is gone, and

if all the world were as good as she, there would be no need of any other heaven."

"Shut the door," answered Lady Marchdale; "I did not ask your opinion."

Bernard retired, and all the servants mingled tears and wailing for the loss of their favourite, while every effort to trace Zorilda was fruitless. The dairy-maid, who was very superstitious, almost persuaded the rest at length, that the fairies who she knew to a certainty were often busy in conveying cows secretly from their pastures, had some hand in the elopement of Miss Zoé. "Any way, she is gone upon nothing harmful," was the unanimous decision below stairs. As to Rachel, every body knew that she was to leave the service, and no one was puzzled at her disappearance.

Several days were spent in discussions and controversy before the earl and his son returned to Henbury. Lord Hautonville had scarcely seen his mother before he flew off to Zorilda's apartment. The door was open. He went in, and called. From thence he ran down stairs,

and out into the shrubberies, not waiting to ask a question of any one; but seeking her through all the places which were familiar to remembrance, and not a little indignant at her absence in the moment of his arrival.

The gardener at last appeared, and stunned him by the intelligence that Zorilda had been missing for several days.

"Missing! gone!—Where—when—how—with whom? Did she receive any letters? Did any gentleman visit here? Tell me every thing this moment. Order fresh horses directly. I will largely reward whoever brings me intelligence of their route, and be the death of any man who conceals information. Be quick;—fly!—but tell me before you go all about her departure."

Such were the incoherencies which burst all in a breath from Lord Hautonville, who seemed so completely bereft of his senses as scarcely to possess the faculty of listening; while Bernard, to to whom they were addressed, endeavoured to reply.

"My lord, nobody here can throw any light

upon the matter. Miss Zoé *did* receive a packet, but we heard that it came from Mr. Playfair."

"Accursed treachery; foul contrivance all. I know who sent the letter. How did it come: by post or messenger? Who brought it here, and when did she receive it?"

"Two days before her departure, my lord," answered Bernard; "a sallow-looking man, well mounted, a stranger here, rode to the lodge in the dusk of the evening, and inquired for Rachel, who went to know his commands, and thought it some message from Marchdale-court. When she returned to the house we inquired what she had seen or heard; but she put us off with saying that it was only a friend of Mr. Playfair's who desired him to call as he passed, and ask after the family. This seemed plausible enough, but since all this stir, and questioning, it has come out that little Ben Tyrrel, who held the gate while the gentleman stopped at it, saw him give Rachel a large packet."

"Death and fury! I see the whole train. I know it all. The messenger was a dark devil of

an Italian. His own man, whose heart's blood shall answer for this. Call Rachel; let me see her instantly. But stay—not so fast. How did she receive it? Did she appear agitated, or seemed pleased? What did she do? How did she look?"

"We do not know, my Lord, for my Lady had ordered Miss Zoé not to quit her apartment for many days. It seems they had some words in my Lady's dressing-room, and Rachel was the only one who took any refreshment to our dear and good young lady; and every time that she came from her room, she used to be in tears herself, and said that it would melt a heart of stone to see how Miss Zoé would walk all day backwards and forwards, with her hands clasped, and her eyes streaming. It was a pitiful sight. Well, when she went, it was so softly and so secretly, that no mortal man or woman about the place, saw her go out. The very dogs never barked, and that is no wonder, for they were so fond of her, that they would follow her to Jamaica, if she was going there."

"Curse your folly!" exclaimed Lord Hau-

tonville. "Never mind the dogs. Was it a chaise and four? Where did it meet her?"

"My Lord, sure I am telling your Lordship as plain as I can speak, that there was no sign of man, or horse, or carriage, or any thing else, even to the value of a wheel-barrow, to leave track or trace in the finest gravel round all Henbury. There wasn't a sign even of her light footsteps, so much as would crush down a daisy's head, across the fields, to tell us which way she went; and, as the ignorant people say, it was as much like Fairies' work as any thing that ever came to pass. The only one thing that with all our spelling and putting together, we could remark was, that latterly she grew timoursome about taking long walks, as she used to do; and Matthew the gardener observed one day that she came hastily into the shrubbery gate, looking pale, as if she was frightened; but that was long ago before your lordship returned, and we concluded that the cattle might have startled her, though she said nothing, only did not go out of the grounds again."

"Call Rachel, call Rachel. Bring Ben Tyr-

rell. Where is my mother? I will question every one; make haste."

"My Lord, Rachel is no longer here; she quitted the service on the very day that Miss Zoé left the house, and went to farmer Wilson's, her brother; and here is my Lady herself coming to look for you."

Lady Marchdale entered the room with a reproachful air, and upbraided her son with his want of affection. "I have," said she, "been calling you every where. Is this the way in which you meet me after such an absence?"

"What have you done with Zorilda?" answered Lord Hautonville, with a savage countenance, as he looked sternly at his mother.

"I know nothing of the ungrateful girl," replied Lady Marchdale; "she has taken herself out of my protection, and proved herself unworthy of my regard."

"Madam," answered her son, "we part this moment, and for ever, if you conceal a single tittle of all you know. Why did you imprison her? Where is she gone? She is mine, and I will follow her. Nothing shall prevail upon me

to give her up; and you will not accomplish any end by keeping me in the dark. Tell me all, I beg; I *demand* that you do not deceive me. The most fatal consequences may result from this affair; consequences which you little anticipate."

Terrified out of her senses, Lady Marchdale now began to repent the cruel part which she had acted; and told her son, without reserve, all that she had to tell. Her proposal to Zorilda to reject his suit, and bind herself by a written promise never to ally herself with the family of Hartland; Zorilda's refusal—her subsequent imprisonment—farewell note, and mysterious departure, were all detailed with an effort at amplification, which seemed as if designed to bury the recollection of past unkindness and neglect towards an amiable orphan, in the importance and display of the present statement.

Algernon's impetuous temper broke out into unmeasured reproaches against his mother, whom he charged, without any regard to decency, with selfishness, pride, and barbarity. In the expression, "Circumstances have occurred,"

contained in Zorilda's note, he found ample confirmation of his suspicions, which were no other than that the Marquess of Turnstock, having first unsuccessfully urged his suit, and terrified her by an unexpected appearance at Henbury, had afterwards adopted the artifice of assuming the name of Mr. Playfair, to practise on her credulity, and decoy her from her friends. Rushing like a lunatic from the house, Lord Hautonville's first essay was at farmer Wilson's. There he summoned the boy who had driven Rachel to the carrier's inn, but could learn no more than that he had performed his mission; that the good woman travelled alone, and was safely lodged at her destination. His next resolve was to mount a horse, and go off to this place, where he obtained no farther satisfaction. Rachel was gone; and the people of the inn were not sure, but thought they could recollect that she spoke of being on her way to London, seeking after a bad debt. Here the clue was lost. To look for Rachel in the metropolis would have been like searching for a grain of mustard seed in the sands of the sea.

In vain Lord Marchdale represented to his son the folly of his conduct, and the necessity of remaining at home to meet several persons who were appointed to assemble at Henbury on legal business. It was in vain that Lady Marchdale alternately stormed and beseeched. Arguments, threats, and caresses were alike ineffectual. Post horses were ordered; and before the morning's dawn, on the following day, Lord Hautonville and his valet were on the high road to London. But we return, to attend on the steps of our female travellers.

END OF VOL. I.

J. B. Nichols and Son, 25, Parliament-street.